GROUSE **by W. C.**

The SHOOTING TIMES
and Country Magazine

SEVENTY-FIFTH YEAR FRIDAY, AUGUST 16th, 1957 1s. 3d. WEEKLY

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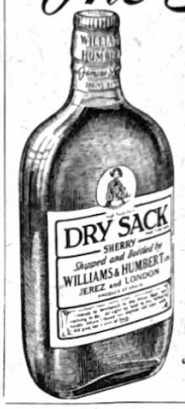

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Predator - Prey Relationship

IT has long been obvious, though regrettably disregarded by many, that poor game stocks are very largely the result of inefficient or inadequate vermin control. On the face of it the principles of vermin destruction appear simple enough, but a longer look discloses that the whole question of predator reduction may be, in the light of modern conditions, a more complex overall problem than is comonly supposed.

At first sight, it would seem that the ideal shoot is one without any vermin at all if such a state of affairs were possible. Even supposing it were possible to eliminate every head of vermin on a shoot, there would be no means of preventing infiltration from outside and it is the unkeepered areas surrounding shoots that cause the keeper such a headache, for just as he is getting the situation under control a new influx may start from outside where he can never get to the root of the trouble.

But the total elimination of all vermin might prove a doubtful blessing and cause repercussions far more harmful to game and agriculture than the damage at present inflicted. In preserving a natural balance between the species, every creature, however apparently useless and destructive, has a part to play and often its usefulness is not realised until it is in danger of becoming extinct, when the immediate reaction is to give it protection and a chance to regain its former status. Unfortunately by then it is usually too late.

In more scientific language the report of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature has the following to say :

" There is considerable evidence that excessive and harmful populations of predators, including such omnivorous species as crows and gulls, are normally a by-product of years of ecological mismanagement. In the short run direct repression of predators may seem inevitable in such situations, but so long as the ecological conditions remain favourable to them it will be difficult if not impossible to bring about substantial improvement without disproportionate expenditure of manpower and harmful repercussions in other fields. Effort should therefore be concentrated on determining and carrying out as quickly as possible the necessary background modifications in habitat to bring about a healthier balance. This calls for a scientific appreciation of the ecological and other background conditions giving rise to a healthy predator situation and to freedom from animal pests."

The latest annual report of I.C.I. Game Services, Fordingbridge, includes an interesting record, in the form of a graph, of annual bags of game and vermin, over the last ten years, and it is significant that the game and vermin graph lines follow a very similar pattern. No conclusion is drawn from this, but it will be observed that high production years for game have generally coincided with what would appear to be good breeding seasons for vermin.

As the report says, the inter-relationship of predator and prey is extremely complex. In the meantime, if we shoot all vermin on sight and take a little more trouble to look for it, we shall be dealing with the essence of the problem in the simplest way.

THE SHOOTING TIMES AND COUNTRY MAGAZINE

Official Organ of
THE WILDFOWLERS' ASSOCIATION
OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

No. 3910 FRIDAY, AUGUST 16, 1957 Founded 1882

The wild life of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust. We must account for it to those who come after.—King George VI.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Game in Rutland

My thanks for another report from a keeper ; this time to one who has a post in the smallest county. Here are his notes :

" We ourselves have done very well with our pheasants, losing only just over one per pen. We reared 80 pens of birds, 17 to a pen to start with, finishing up with 16 to all but 5 pens. One of these 5 held 11 birds, the other four 15 apiece. We've just got the last lot to wood (July 9).

" Never once got really wet on the field, and only once had to wear a raincoat for more than an hour or two. Shirt-sleeve order pretty well throughout.

" No gapes, but a fair amount of feather picking. It is quite a problem, and one snag to pen rearing. The main one, I should say. It will no doubt be ironed out in time.

" On other fields birds seem to have done all right. Here and there I've heard of a bit of trouble, nothing very serious, and generally speaking we all have our hopes of better times ahead. About something time too !

" We are rearing 30 pens of partridges too. These have reared better than last year, though nothing like so good as the pheasants, partridges never do it seems. We are spreading them out well this year in the hope (vain ?) that they will not pack up.

" Wild birds are doing well, though a drop more rain would have been welcome. More losses from early grass cutting this year."

He ends with favourable wild duck news, and asks whether it is unusual for snipe to perch on telephone posts. Apparently a cock bird spends most of its day sitting on a telegraph pole in a patch of swamp where its mate is sitting.

Uncommon, I should say, but not unexpected. Time enough I have seen snipe perched on fence posts, so why not on a higher pole ?

Dangerous Canadas

A recent report from British Columbia told of a Canada gander which attacked a swimming deer so furiously that the animal drowned. It seems that the deer inadvertently swam too close to the shoreline nest on which a goose was incubating eggs. The attending gander instantly attacked.

A Canada gander, in the best tradition of coloured heavyweights, is an opponent to be reckoned with, and the reference to these geese in the report of the last meeting of the Executive Committee of W.A.G.B.I. under the heading " Handle With Care," is not to be lightly dismissed. In America, attacks by Canadas on dogs, timber wolves and even bears, have been recorded.

In this country the geese are not above biting the hand that feeds them. Wounds inflicted by a gander prevented prominent committee member Mr. J. L. Hirst, of Morecambe, from attending the last Wildfowlers' Association meeting at Birmingham, and for all I know, he still bears the scars to prove it.

Hydro Electric Stocking

A reference to the stocking of new hydro-electric reservoirs was made by Mr. Thomas Johnston, C.H., LL.D., Chairman of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board, at the opening of the Errochty power station on Saturday, July 27. The station, the sixth in the Tummel Valley, was formally opened by The Rt. Hon. John Maclay, C.M.G., M.P., Secretary of State for Scotland. Mr. Johnston said :

" The Board has not yet decided whether or not to stock the Errochty waters with trout. Between 1951 and 1956 we stocked various new lochs with 150,000 young trout and fry at a cost of about £4,000, in an endeavour to assist in developing the tourist industry.

" Arrangements, generally satisfactory, have been placed in the hands of local angling associations, but we have not been encouraged in our good works by reports of organised predatory bands, without licence or authority, spinning and using bait lines, while the angling associations are helpless.

" Has the time not come when the report of the Maconochie Committee 10 years ago on poaching and illegal fishing should be given legislative authority so far as trout is concerned ? In England there is such legislation."

Proof House Part Time

I understand that the Birmingham Proof House is at present heavily engaged in the proof of surplus military firearms, but because of the spasmodic nature of the work would prefer not to engage more permanent staff. Men associated with the trade who would take on a part-time job are invited to apply to the Proof Master. The work may include degreasing, cleaning, firing, packing or simple examination of any type of weapon.

Stolen Gun

Messrs. Arthur Conyers Ltd., of Blandford, report the loss by theft from a customer of a Browning over and under shotgun, No. 2451. If this gun is offered for sale the police should be advised at once.

AUCEPS.

Sorting out the bag after an hour's pigeon flighting.

About This and That

by Tower-Bird

THIS will be my final word about the wildfowler's dog, and is more or less an enlargement of the brief points made in my letter (issue August 2). It does not concern running-in to the fall, but the colour of dogs, and whether this question is of much importance.

Let me say at once that, in my estimation (and I shoot all the year round), it is of considerable importance, always remembering that the average fowler probably spends as much (if not more) of his time on freshwater marshes and in pigeon shooting inland than he does in the close proximity of the saltings. Now, I am aware that black retrievers are popular, and I like to see these dogs at conventional game shoots sitting quietly beside their masters, their every sense keyed up watching for game to rise — and fall. They are still ; they are usually behind a hedge or a butt — in any case, driven grouse, pheasants or partridges are unlikely to change the direction of their flight on account of the colour of a dog, always providing it is not running about at large.

Naturally, movement is far more important than colour, whatever kind of shooting is taking place. Certainly the fowler, whether he is at flight, decoying, or pigeon shooting will expect his dog to keep still, for the sharp eyes of duck and pigeon will quickly discern movement, especially if they have been well shot and are therefore inclined to be wild. Yet, as I pointed out in my letter, a yellow or brown dog, hunting out, say, a reed-bed for fallen birds, is far less likely to be seen by duck flying round than is a black, or a white dog. Likewise, a brown or yellow dog searching for a pigeon down in kale or roots, bracken, or any rough cover, may well go undetected by oncoming birds when a black or white one would cause them to sheer off when still far out of shot.

Colour Does Count

Nor can I agree that movement only is what matters and not colour at all. If, say, you are walking across a stubble field, a meadow or marshland where there is little cover, and you see duck or pigeon approaching at a distance, you may sink slowly to the ground and bid your dog "Sit!", or "Lie!", but, ten to one, the birds will see a black or a white (particularly the former) dog, whereas one whose colour toned in with the ground and general surroundings, such as a yellow labrador, or a "multi-coloured" animal, will not attract their attention.

Even on the open muds, or in a gutter in the saltings, a black dog shows up so obviously that one can note how duck, curlew, or any other bird for that matter, will spy him at a distance. And, of course, when you send him out to hunt for a bird down (or if he goes of his own accord !) a black or a white dog will show up "for miles," where sometimes even a hunting brown or yellow dog, belly-deep in cover, will not be seen by, approaching birds until too late.

As I said in my letter, *experience* tells, and every day last season when we were flighting duck two days a week and more, I used to despair of keeping my black dog out of sight (particularly when hiding behind a single post out in the floods), while my shooting partner, with his yellow labrador, became "one with the surroundings."

Theory and Practice

As I say, this is, for some months at least, my last word on this particular subject, except to say that I am not interested in theories about it. When you shoot day after day, and sometimes night after night, under all manner of conditions, theory becomes far less important to one than practice !

Regarding "W.C.'s" contention that pigeon are inclined to need ear-trumpets, being a bit hard of hearing, I merely beg leave to doubt this assumption, even though "W.C." is a very practical shooting man (as I happen to know), and a specialist on pigeon and crows. Pigeon, I am inclined to think, are by no means deaf, but often so *pre-occupied* that deafness is the impression one might gain about them. If they were, in fact, deaf, how is it that when stalking pigeon in a wood free from leaf, the slightest crack of a twig or click of a safety-catch can startle a bird ? Let me elaborate. On countless occasions I have stalked the *coo*, rather than the bird, until, finally, I have seen it on a nearby tree. Believing in telepathy, I do all I can to keep my mind off the quarry, but equally on the danger of stepping on a brittle twig. For that reason, I freeze as soon as the *coo* has stopped, moving forward carefully again when it re-starts.

Often enough, I have stepped on a twig, and the sound has caused the (now non-cooing) pigeon quickly to shoot up its head and peer all round and underneath. Again, I have watched a bird settle, and then listen intently for another to *coo*. Presently, from far away, one hears a faint *coo, coo*, and, soon after it has ceased, our newly-arrived bird will answer the "challenge" (if challenge it is). A pigeon in need of a deaf-aid would not hear a small twig crack ; nor hear the distant, quiet *coo* of another bird.

Wooing and Fighting

On the other hand, pigeon frequently *appear* to be deaf. I was waiting for pigeon and magpies yesterday evening, and, on four occasions, a pigeon came drifting low across the marsh, to fly up into some willows sixty yards from where I lay in ambush. Each time, I clapped my hands loudly, hoping that the about-to-settle bird would, on hearing the clap, swing round and give me a shot. And I noticed that, within seconds of settling, pigeon either started to *coo*, or to make that challenging high moaning sound. Thus, I surmise, their thoughts were on wooing or fighting, rather than on cooing and flighting, and that either the clap of my hands was mistaken for the clap of a pigeon's wing (which I very much doubt), or that so intent on their feelings were the birds that they actually did not hear, or interpret danger from the noise I made.

Even when I have been waiting, hidden, out on the marshes, and pigeon have flown down to drink, or to settle on a post before flying down to drink, I have often, from my place of concealment, clapped loudly, hoping that the pigeon would rise and come within range, but few take any notice, and, admittedly, I have no theory why this should be so. I might well believe them to be deaf, but there is so much evidence to the contrary, that I am unable to accept deafness in pigeon as a reality. And, in case there is a reader who will say that they are pretty deaf, but keen in their sense of smell, and that it is not the cracking twig which arouses their suspicion in a wood, but rising scent, I must point out that, the more still the winter wood, the quicker they are to hear a twig break.

Before leaving the subject of pigeon, I felt a quite "uncanny" twitch to my spine when I read, in *The Southern Weekly*, what my old friend "Skim Coulter" had to say about them this week, for I, myself, had intended to bring out just these points. I will quote briefly from him, or he may think I am guilty of the crime of plagiarism !

"Not for so many years have I seen so many pigeon in late July. . . . Last winter, the mildest for many years, gave the pigeon population, from October right round to March, plentiful, well-dispersed feeding on acorns, beech-mast, ivy berries and clover-leys. These sources of supply lasted out so well that the usual attacks on kale and cabbage crops were practically non-existent. It was a two-way gain. For while farmers and market gardeners suffered very little damage, the pigeon themselves experienced exceptionally low mortality.

"There is no doubt that cold weather accounts for many pigeon deaths. When their feeding grounds are concentrated by snowfall into one or two fields, many are shot over decoys. Others succumb to a type of avian diphtheria which seems to have been widespread in recent cold winters . . ."

"In most years pigeon first attack the corn harvest by way of laid patches, more or less irrespective of variety. This year, in almost complete absence of lodged crops, they have concentrated on wheat from the first. When a lead from the rooks has been forthcoming, they have pitched straight into the standing corn, mostly choosing a thin place to start from . . ."

Nevertheless, I have recently watched pigeon doing this, without any lead-in from rooks.

GROUSE

by W. C.

TWO mornings ago, at 11 a.m., came a telephone call from the editor of *The Shooting Times*. Since I was pursuing the motor-mower around the lawn, my arrival at the instrument was delayed. The result was that he apologised for getting me out of bed so early; and followed up this defamatory witticism by demanding something about grouse shooting at absurdly short notice. If only he knew how much scratching of head and of paper takes place before I can produce even the flimsiest of articles, he would not, I am sure, have made so unreasonable a request.

In any case, I hardly feel qualified to write about grouse. I have done eleven Augusts in Scotland and one in Orkney, but the sport has been on a very modest scale. Between one and three hundred brace per season is the figure to which I am accustomed, whereas the great ones no doubt think in terms of such bags *per day*. Moreover, apart from a whole season in Orkney, and two odd days elsewhere, over dogs, nearly all my shooting has been walking-up. I have had only half-a-dozen days driving.

Heretical though the statement may seem to a devotee of the sport, I think that the main attraction of walking-up grouse lies in the magnificence of the surrounding scenery, and, in eastern Scotland anyway, in the superb dry and bracing climate, where, no matter how far one walks, one does not get tired.

From the purely sporting point of view I much prefer walking-up partridges. Surely half the fun of partridge shooting, when the coveys are few, strong on the wind and rather wild, lies in marking them down, following them up, and trying to out-manœuvre them. This is scarcely ever possible with grouse. Sometimes, of course, at the beginning of the season, a covey soon pitches again, but usually they fly so far that deliberate following up is out of the question. They rise, one bags a brace or so, or misses, and then forgets all about them. No doubt one does the same in districts where partridges are thick on the ground, but I have never shot in such places, and am not sure that I want to. Sour grapes, maybe!

When Grouse Were Wild

A friend remarked to me last September how much easier to hit walked-up partridges were than grouse, but I did not agree. Certainly driven grouse fly faster than partridges, but the difference in speed is scarcely noticeable when walking-up. I think it is largely a question of which you find the more disconcerting—the sudden silent rising of a grouse covey, or the screeching chatter that accompanies the flushing of a covey of partridges. Both are easy enough to kill when it is windless and they are lying well, and easy to miss when it is windy and they are wild.

Talking of wildness, I remember that during the three seasons when I shot in Aberdeenshire, the grouse were very much wilder—some of them impossibly so, even on the Twelfth—than they ever became in Ross-shire or Orkney; and a friend who used to shoot in the Hebrides told me that there, too, they lay well, no matter how late in the season, whereas when he shot in Perthshire they soon became wild. Possibly this is due to the fact that the grouse population in Aberdeenshire and its surrounding counties is much denser than it is further north or west. Not a very satisfactory explanation, but I can think of no other.

As I have confessed, my experience of driven grouse is very slight, but from the little that I have done, I should say that they are much more difficult than either partridges or pheasants. Their speed is high enough in calm weather; down-wind it is terrific.

"But," someone may say, "so is the speed of a pheasant." True enough, but a pheasant is well up in the air; you can see it easily. A grouse, on the other hand, often comes both very fast and very low, so low indeed that it is sometimes difficult to pick the bird out against the background of heather. Those people whose method is to give their target a deliberate, calculated lead, must find down-wind grouse almost impossible. I have told elsewhere how a driven grouse shot of great experience once said to me: "With down-wind grouse, if you start thinking about swing or lead you have not a hope. The only thing is to put your gun up at them and pull."

This man also said that the best bag-filler at driven grouse was not he who had the highest ratio of kills to cartridges, but he who was *quickest*. He might not be so accurate a shot as the other, but what he lost in accuracy he would more than make up for by the fact that he let off more cartridges.

Though driven grouse may be more difficult to the shooter than partridges or pheasants, grouse, driven or otherwise, are infinitely easier for the retriever. They seldom run any great distance, and they seem to carry a much stronger scent. Or it may be that scenting conditions in heather, except when it is very hot and there is a lot of pollen flying about, are particularly good.

Increasing the Bag

Anyway, I know that during the last seven seasons, with two or three good dogs in action, we have never lost more than one or two birds *altogether*—birds, that is, which were definitely marked down either wounded or dead. And the dogs have often increased the bag by unexpectedly producing from the heather dead birds which had carried on without giving any sign of being hit.

One season, indeed, I thought that we were going to get away without any losses at all. We were nearing the end of the last beat of our last day, and up to then had killed nearly a hundred brace without losing a bird. Then a covey rose in front of me and I got a right and left. Both birds went down as if dead and not more than thirty yards apart. My bitch found the first at once, and I had not the slightest doubt that she would find the second, too. But we never did find that second grouse, in spite of working the ground over and over again with three dogs for at least half-an-hour. It was as mysterious as it was disappointing to have our record spoilt in the last few minutes of our fortnight.

When one is walking-up grouse which are rather scarce and lying well, a good steady labrador, which will range, wind the birds, *and then obey the stop whistle*, is a great asset. A German pointer-retriever also is useful and ranges wider of course, but the only two that I know have what one might politely describe as "a slight tendency" to course hares and put up birds in the process.

A Joy, Or the Devil

A good English pointer or a setter is a joy; a bad one is the very devil. Four years ago I had a day with a fortunate friend who has a godmother with a big moor in Sutherland. The pointer which we had out that day was a very handsome dog. He was, in fact, a champion at Cruft's; but he must also have been a member of some canine anti-blood sports society, for he galloped through every covey and put them up miles away. Needless to say, he was laid off work after an hour or so and spent the rest of the morning until he was sent home, trying to lengthen the keeper's arms. Once relieved of this show-bench encumbrance, we had a good day's sport walking-up, getting thirty-three brace.

I remember the day chiefly for the fact that, having shot atrociously in the morning, I never missed in the afternoon. I seemed to be doing exactly the same as I had done in the morning, but whereas in the morning many birds sped on untouched, in the afternoon they hit the deck with monotonous regularity.

Some people with an excellent bump of locality in the type of country to which they are accustomed, can get completely lost on a moor, even if there are prominent landmarks and they know it fairly well. An uncle of mine is one of these.

The August before last was terribly hot. We were doing a particularly long and hilly beat one day so I suggested at lunch time that my uncle, aged eighty, and another man of seventy-four, should either wait for us at the lunch place while we climbed higher to try for a ptarmigan, or take a beat back in their own time.

Well, we found a covey of ptarmigan and killed a brace, and then I got out my binoculars and saw the two veterans striding homewards. As they were then going in the right direction I had no qualms about their getting back safely; but when the rest of us finally reached home after a very long day, there was no sign of them.

(Continued on next page)

A shooting lunch on the moors in Ross-shire.

GUN GOSSIP

by North Country

A READER asks me whether he should invest in a 12-bore or a 16-bore. He is buying a new gun and wants to make the most of his money—which is only natural. This is a straight-cut question which is not so straight to answer. In the face of things it is simple but on investigation there is much more in it. Buying a gun always was a job. Today, when it means a minor investment it assumes still larger proportions.

My correspondent unfortunately omitted to tell me very much about himself, such as age, build, health, shooting experience and so on. Such details are rather important in a case of this kind—particularly age. For while a 16 is in all conscience an entirely man-size gun, it is a bit lighter than a 12 and it handles very comfortably and neatly, and it is perhaps an ideal weapon for a man who has passed fifty and who does not want to be burdened with too much weight. I have heard such men say that every extra ounce of gun or equipment makes a difference to their shooting and their lasting powers. Of 16-bore users whom I have known nearly all have been men in middle life, and all have been *good* shots, including a keeper and a farmer who seldom seemed to miss any reasonable shot.

This man has, however, given me a fair amount of information about the shooting he expects to do. He is (or will be) a member of a syndicate having about 1,200 acres in a good part of Sussex—well-preserved and well-keepered land offering a mixed bag.

Ideal for the Purpose

In other words I should say he can look forward to some very tolerable sport under pleasant conditions (he lives about 20 minutes car ride away). This might almost be a bit of luxury shooting in a small way, under modern conditions, as I know there are some nice shoots in the district. If this reader expects to shoot in this way for the future, I should say a 16-bore would be an ideal weapon. It possesses all the necessary power, it handles and balances superbly and it is a lovely firearm in every respect. My friend who uses a pair for grouse shooting and who is now in Scotland will be telling me about his experiences a little later. We may indeed be hearing quite a lot of 16-bore news later on.

A shooting acquaintance who as far as I know never used any other gun was still shooting *well* to my knowledge at 85. That is a fine age at which to be still actively engaged in sport. He "wiped my eye" at a pheasant (a fairly high bird) when he was nearly this age. If I ever doubted his prowess or the qualities of a 16-bore, I ceased to do so from that date. But let a 16 be a 16. If you wish to fire 1¼oz. of shot, I am in favour of a 12-bore. The standard 16 load of 1⅛oz. is plenty—so long as it is handled effectively in the bore and the gun is properly aligned.

The pigeon shooter can be a bit busier now in most parts of the country. There are other ways of making a bag than decoying, etc. One of my favourite ways is to wait under or adjacent to a certain group of oaks near some corn fields. Here I am assured at least of some shooting at almost any hour of the day. It is just a matter of being there. But what a variety of shots it is possible to get at the expense of a minimum of trouble! Birds coming, birds going, high and wide crossers, snap-shots, deliberate shots and, of course, some sitters—depending mostly on how and where you stand. With the cover of the leaf so many positions are offered. Much depends on position. It scarcely pays to get too near the trunk of the tree at this time of year—this imposes too many limits. There are really no rules to this game; you must stand where it pays you and take your birds as you can. You will always get some shooting and if you go often enough you will get all the birds you are likely to require.

Where a couple of guns can walk, one on either side of a belt of trees where pigeon go, some good shots may be had as birds dart out. It is brisk exhilarating sport but it calls for plenty of trees and belts.

Gasworks Marsh

by James C. Sandison

FOR some years I have been fortunate in being allowed to shoot over fifteen hundred acres of land in Worcestershire. Roughly half of the land is afforested and half arable. The owner has little interest in shooting, and no attention has been given to vermin control or restocking for twenty years. Nevertheless it is not a bad rough shoot. There are several coveys of partridges and a few pheasants and woodcock in the wood, although, owing to the completely uncontrolled undergrowth, the latter are hard to find.

Unfortunately, I am there only occasionally and am unable to do anything of noticeable value to improve the shoot, and, in fact to put any birds down would in all probability draw the undesirable attention of poachers to the fact that there was something there after all. So nature takes charge of things, and despite the great number of foxes, magpies, jays, and stoats about the place the head of game varies remarkably little from one year to the next.

Last Christmas, a friend and I decided to have a walk round to try and pick up a brace or two of partridges and pheasants, to send to some relations, and had a fairly successful afternoon. One of the borders of this estate follows the River Severn for about a mile, and owing to there being a right-of-way along the bank and many keen course fishermen in evidence, three quarters of the bank and its immediate vicinity is pretty hopeless as cover.

Unlikely Holding Ground

The remainder of the bank lies on the other side of the bridge which carries the main road into the town on the far bank, and had always struck me as being a singularly unlikely holding ground for anything as it is a partially flooded swamp littered with old tins and scrap-iron. Also the town gasworks lies immediately opposite.

Anyway, we had agreed to call it a day, and were walking back along the bank of the river to see how the angling fraternity were getting on. We arrived at the bridge and were about to follow the road home when my friend happened to notice the "swamp." I mentioned that it might hold a duck in a less unsavoury setting. He asked whether I had ever investigated it. I had not, and he suggested that we should take a quick walk through definitely to establish the fact that there was nothing there. And so I remained behind some pollarded willows while he walked round the extreme edge so as to get in at the far end and drive whatever might be there in my direction.

I was just in the process of filling my pipe, when there was a frantic shout of "Over!" from the other side, and before I realised what was happening, three pairs of mallard and a mass of snipe were over my head and well on their way to a safer destination before I had rammed some cartridges into the gun, having unloaded and not bothered to reload. I was more prepared for a second wave of duck, and managed to bring down a shoveler, while my friend had a right and left at snipe, and arrived at the willows. Both of us were astonished at the turn of events and agreed to wait for their possible return when it grew dark.

We therefore established ourselves in bunches of rough grass about seventy yards apart; and after an hour had passed we could hear duck whistling down on to the water all round us, but it was one of those clear, moonlight nights with no low cloud for a background, and we couldn't see a sausage. We did not fire another shot and had to leave the following day. Nevertheless, the lesson we learnt was that even the most unlikely inland pools of water very often have possibilities, and although, at the time of writing, we are on the west coast of Canada, look forward eagerly to the day when we can again visit the Gaswork's marsh.

Grouse

(Continued from preceding page)

Their absence caused great alarm and we were in the act of organising all-night search parties when they telephoned from a town *six miles* to westward, where they had fetched-up after losing their way! What is more, they had killed three brace of grouse in the course of their trek—all poached, of course—under the amazing delusion that they were still on their own ground. A fine example of the toughness of the over-seventies!

Grouse shooting is usually expensive. It is possible, I believe, to pay as much as £250 for one week's board and driving on a first-class moor. But sometimes one is lucky. For three years four of us went to a place in Aberdeenshire where the total cost of board, lodging *and* shooting on a 100-150 brace well-keepered moor was £25 for a fortnight! No chance of such economy this year, though. I am bound for Royal Dee-side where I hope to learn — to the cartridge maker's benefit, no doubt — a little more about the speed of a driven grouse.

Finally here is a story about grouse shooting that was told to me by an instructor at a shooting school, a man as notable for his fund of good stories as for the excellence of his instruction.

It seems that one day this instructor was in the shop of a certain gun and cartridge maker who no longer exists. Let us call him Barrell. He overheard Mr. Barrell telling a customer, evidently rather a "green" one, how one day, when walking-up grouse, he had found himself next to a man who was using a five-shot automatic. This man could not hit a thing. "So," said Mr. Barrell, "I said to him 'you take my double and I'll take your automatic.'"

"Well," he continued, "I took the automatic and very soon a covey rose in front of me. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! — five grouse. I reloaded and shortly afterwards another covey rose. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! — five grouse. Once more I reloaded, we walked a little further, and then a third covey rose. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!—and then I missed the fifteenth grouse!"

"Good heavens Mr. Barrell," exclaimed the now pop-eyed customer, "you must be a marvellous shot!"

"Oh no," replied Mr. Barrell modestly. "No credit to me. The explanation is *very* simple. I was using Barrell cartridges."

The cartridge cart arrives at the butts on the Twelfth.

Round the Game Preserves

by David Imrie

ALTHOUGH minor upsets are bound to occur occasionally in the best regulated shoots, I have never failed to be impressed by the efficient organisation of grouse driving under an experienced headkeeper. Everything goes like clockwork, even when two teams of drivers are operating. But this efficiency is not achieved easily. It is actually the result of tremendous mental and physical effort; and an ageing headkeeper once confessed to me while we were setting out for the moor that the strain was becoming too great for him, although no one could have guessed this from his cool demeanour.

Before the shoot the headkeeper has a number of details which must be settled in a definite fashion. He must make certain well in advance that enough drivers, flankers and loaders will be available at the right time; that he can hire men with ponies for the panniers and for elderly shooters; that his undermen understand thoroughly the programme for the day, and the alternative programme, if wind from the wrong quarter upsets the original plan; that each guest knows how many cartridges to bring; that shepherds are advised of shooting arrangements, so that they may not get in the way; that sufficient hampers are in the larder ready for the morning after the shoot; that transport is ordered for the drivers, if a far out beat is being shot; that the lunch will be taken to the proper hut; that enough dogs will be with the party, so that the picking-up is not unduly delayed; that he gets a list of grouse for presents from his employer, otherwise he may let too many go to the game salesmen; that he can guarantee to get a couple of men the day after the shoot to pick-up with a keeper, and so forth.

An Unfortunate Lapse

But those routine details are actually the least part of a moorland headkeeper's worries before the Twelfth. He can, if he feels inclined, write them down, then tick each item off when it is settled satisfactorily. In that fashion he is unlikely to get into a panic at the last minute, because something has been overlooked. But the fallibility of the people on whom he depends from the accurate interpretation of his orders is another matter. All his careful organisation can be upset by the stupidity of some member or members of the team; and he very often has to shoulder the blame.

One unfortunate lapse occurred one morning when we intended to shoot a peculiar hogback moor, which was divided by a stone wall. This wall ran straight up the front slope, over the ridge, and finished at the boundary at the far side. Now, to drive this odd moor successfully the drivers had to line up against the wall beyond the ridge, and sweep it round in a half circle to the shooters, who were lined behind the same wall on the front slope. This was normally quite simple; but by a piece of bad luck there was mist on the ridge that morning. So the headkeeper told an elderly driver who would be on the pivot side to remain below the mist on the front until all the shooters were in position, then to climb over the ridge and so warn the underkeeper in charge of the drivers that he and his men could start. Nothing could have been clearer.

Disobeying Orders

Alas, the old man, who had got his instructions concisely in my hearing at the gunroom door, decided that he could disobey the headkeeper's order slightly without causing any trouble. Instead of stopping below the mist on the front face of the hill, he went over the back with his mates to have a chat until the shooters were nearly due to arrive. This idea might have worked well enough; but he either forgot about the shooters altogether or he miscalculated the starting time.

Meanwhile, the shooters, loaders and flankers had got into position. The headkeeper and I were flanking just below the mist, which persisted, although a chilly breeze was blowing uphill in our faces. After quite a long time had elapsed without the sign of a grouse, the headkeeper came towards me, looking rather anxious, and remarked that the coveys must have flown over the heads of the drivers. I was preparing to agree with him, when a voice from the mist said casually: "Should I tell t'drivers to begin now, Mr. X?" That caused a panic! Mr. X turned to the old man, swearing horribly, and told him to get the adjectival drive started at once. The shooters knew, of course, that someone had blundered, and the atmosphere was not too pleasant for the rest of the forenoon.

It happens that the customary efficiency of grouse driving under a first-class headkeeper is also spoiled by careless flankers. And they are most likely to ruin the whole operation when a strong wind is blowing in their faces, which is just the time when they ought to be particularly alert for birds breaking over them. In conditions of this sort I have known flankers who took shelter in a peat hag for so long that the drive was almost finished when they came to their senses. On one or two occasions the defaulting flankers had become engrossed in a newspaper!

In addition to this vexation, there have been ruffled tempers now and then if a shooter's guns and cartridges failed to turn up on the moor. Normally, the headkeeper, or an underman acting on his orders, will see that all the necessary tackles leaves the gunroom, even when loaders are present. However, the headkeeper has a lot to think about on a shooting morning. He has often to meet his employer for a final talk after breakfast, or he may have grouse to pack. In any case he usually has little time to spare before the shooting brake, wagon, or other transport leaves the lodge, and on many a morning he simply trusts that guns and cartridges will be present and correct at the rendezvous. But almost as bad is the upset when mackintoshes are left behind and a howling rainstorm develops far from any shelter. I confess that I have prayed for the rain to keep off on the very few times when I have been responsible for this omission.

Right and Wrong Way to the Butts

Another upset can be caused when loaders, who are sometimes half-an-hour in advance of the shooters, make a bee-line from the roadway over ground which will be driven first; or worse still, when impatient shooters on ponies make a bee-line to the butts, instead of following the marked route. I have witnessed both these mistakes, when it was too late to correct them. One sportsman on a pony landed in a bog, and the creature was only extricated with the utmost difficulty. It cannot be emphasised too strongly that there is a right way and a wrong way to each line of butts.

Almost as stupid is the man, shooter or loader, who goes a quarter of a mile into the next drive with a wide-ranging dog to pick up a hit bird. This is indeed far enough, even on moors where very long drives are the rule; but if the dog gallops unchecked for a further hundred yards or so serious damage may be done, particularly if a wind is blowing. Excessive ranging after a grouse drive is probably practised more often than not by bad shots. They feel that they must get every possible bird of their own to justify a huge expenditure of cartridges. And they have also learned that by ranging wide they will almost certainly get a few extra birds which morally belong to someone else! On really flat moors the wide ranger is handicapped; but among humps and hollows he can dodge about unseen until it is nearly time for the next drive to begin. But this trickery is not fair to the headkeeper.

Of course, the grouse can be stupid too. The headkeeper devises the most skilful driving programme, and puts it into execution with the care of a general in battle. He warns his undermen of this and that, and he impresses on the flankers the need for swift and accurate judgment at critical times. Then he himself gets down on a flank to watch events. By and by he sees a black cloud on the horizon. It is composed of hundreds of grouse, the whole population of the area. For a minute it appears to be sweeping towards the butts, then it wheels and vanishes. And that is the end of the drive!

Since the level of Loch Ailsh has been raised three feet by the new "De Moleyns dam," Balnagown Estates report that fishing in the loch has greatly improved and very little weed is now evident, with the result that big trout are taking. Mr. A. W. Allen fishing Loch Ailsh on July 29 killed two salmon on trout flies.

If I were the tractor driver I should have a prickly sensation at the back of my neck.

The Young Shot

Harvest Time

by Petrel

LYING in bed suffering from something very akin to the palsey, the penalty of being too lazy to change out of damp clothing resulting from the scattered showers that interspersed, but failed to interrupt a sunny afternoon's perch fishing, I heard them cutting the wheat up on the hill. Which is not strictly correct, for the distant chatter of the binder was borne away on the breeze long before it reached me. Nevertheless, I knew they were cutting, and I could plot to within a chain or two the position of tractor and reaper by the intermittent gunshots, which sounded with less regularity than the reports of the Kro-scare amongst the barley, as the binder rider, drawn on his ever-decreasing circular tour, saluted a rabbit or, perhaps (but softly, please!) larger vermin making a bolt from the standing corn.

I hear you registering dismay and consternation. Carrying a loaded gun on a rocking, swaying machine, which some hidden hazard may all but upset? Shouldn't be allowed!

How right you are, of course, and if I were a shooting-minded farmer with experienced workers hard to find, and their well-being my responsibility, I should not allow such hazardous goings-on, but what is the good of trying to put over this point of view to a veteran farm worker who has always carried a gun on the binder without accident, and who sees no reason to depart from tradition at this late date? Consider also that the gun in question has never been nitro-proved, was bought in the dim, distant past for thirty shillings, and has had fired through it any and every sort of cartridge that could be forced into its leaky breech, and you will have a better idea of the difficulty of persuading its owner to change his ways.

Harder To Train

It is without doubt easier to train a young shot from scratch, be he ever so irresponsible at first, than to attempt to mould obstinate, aged, hardened opinion to safer and more sensible habits. Yet I know that the gunner in question would be, and in fact, is, the first to jump sternly on irresponsible gun-handling by the younger generation, and is a true and trusty countryman to boot. The older and more experienced we become, the more inclined are we to take risks which we deprecate in the young, but it is not a very clever policy, as the gun accident rate in relation to its victims shows only too well.

The old-fashioned binder is not much in evidence nowadays, its place having been usurped by the labour-saving combine. Some of the "old-fashioned," which invariably seems synonymous with "good" farmers hereabouts, still favour the obsolescent machine, and no doubt their reasons are good ones, including a distinct distrust of our fickle weather, which must be, and so seldom is, just right for combining, and the belief, which certainly holds good on the adequately staffed, smaller acreage, that less corn is spilled and wasted by the older harvesting method.

For And Against Combines

From a selfish, shooting point of view, I daresay many of us prefer the older, slower way of harvest. Arguments in favour of the combine are that the machine leaves longer stubble, which means better holding cover for partridges, and thus is an advantage to the rough shooter working his ground over dogs. Also the spilled grain provides better gleaning for game birds. Against this, it may be said that the extra feed is of no account because the stubbles will be ploughed under long before the birds require the spilled grain, and as far as the pigeon shooter, at least, is concerned, a stooked field offers, generally, better chances of sport; an abundance of pickings left for some time in the field, and easily accessible material for the building of a " topical " hide. It is, of course, possible to make an adequate hide, on the circular grouse butt principle, from rakings left by the combine, but, in my experience, I have always had better harvest-time pigeon shooting on stooked wheat —and to a lesser extent barley—than on the combined stubbles.

Much to the glee of the farm workers and their offspring, who always lend a willing hand at harvest time, there are more rabbits in the corn this year than for many a day. Once again, the sun-baked monotony of stooking will be enlivened by an excited hunt or two, and indeed, the harvest field provides an excellent opportunity of reducing the rabbits, providing some vestige of control is applied to the occasion. However, as long as the hunting instinct prevails and rabbits survive to bolt from standing corn, sheer exuberance and excitement is likely to prevail over planned organisation. No matter, so long as no one is maimed by a charge of carelessly directed shot, and how good to see a not-so-old custom revived so speedily, for many of us, I suppose, began our shooting careers in the corn field.

Harvest field shooting is a minor field sport almost forgotten since myxomatosis, but it provides a little light relief in a hot and tiring day for those who are cutting the corn. It cannot be expected to be—and never is—as well organised as one might wish. If it were merely a compulsory matter of destroying every rabbit in the field and run on similar lines to ratting at threshing time, the operation would be simple enough and long nets could eliminate the need for any other method. Fortunately, perhaps, at least from the young shot's point of view, this is not the case.

Safety Precautions

I maintain that the maximum number of guns which should be allowed at such a function is eight, and then only in large fields. They should stand back to back at each corner of the field, so that each side is covered by two guns. when a large area is being cut however, the guns could not command a wide enough field of fire, and in this case it would be better to space them at intervals round the crop.

Normally, only a few guns are present, and the major danger which the rabbits have to face comprises heavy-shod labourers and fleet-footed small boys armed with sticks and stones, or more often than not with only their bare hands. Where the foot-followers predominate, the safest place for the man with the gun is by the hedge or field boundary, where he may deal with rabbits which have escaped the infield without fear of maiming a pursuer. By then the coney will be fully extended and will require a good lead and follow-through if it is to be cleanly somersaulted.

If the field is being cut by the binder, the danger of pellets ricochetting from unstooked sheaves must be considered. A tightly bound sheaf of corn can make pellets rebound for a considerable distance. As frightened rabbits will often seek temporary sanctuary under the sheaves, the danger is magnified. Here is another advantage of cutting with the binder, for rabbits pursued by perspiring sprinters will hide under sheaves and thus may save their followers a heart attack.

Despite the chasing it receives at harvest time, the rabbit remains relatively clear-headed and the wise ones will make a quiet exit from the corn at the first sign of danger. They will often appear at the edge of the uncut field and then, if they do not consider the coast is clear after sitting and viewing the situation for a moment, will retire to find a safer exit. Never shoot towards the centre of the field. The rabbit is bound to leave eventually, and will give someone a safe shot.

When a field holds many rabbits, and it is impossible to cover all the ground, it is a good idea to erect a long net, or even two, along one of the sides. One or two men can attend to the business of despatching any bolters thus entangled, and leave the rest free to deal with the other three flanks. Too often this is reckoned to be not worth the trouble, but it entails little time and may account for half the bag.

Lore of the Land

by John Muers Raby

I HAVE for some time been toying with the idea of some major hedge-clearance. Part of our land is divided into small four- or five-acre fields which, under present day conditions, are no longer economic, though no doubt our forefathers knew what they were about when they planted these hedges. But in this district the pattern of farming has changed over the years, and one can no longer afford the wastage of land and the cost of maintaining redundant hedges. If sub-divisions are subsequently required for temporary convenience an electric, or stake and wire fence will serve as well, and will not harbour vermin, nor require much in the way of maintenance.

There is a Government grant towards the cost of such improvements, and though on principle I abhor all such grants and subsidies, until British Agriculture is put on a cost plus basis—which will be never—this "charity" must be utilised. In the case of the one hedge we have removed to date, we found that the grant plus proceeds of sale of the hedgerow timber just about covered the cost of the operation. But at present this is not always so. Where the hedge borders a ditch this must be pipe-drained before filling in, and this is a much more expensive business than the actual removal of the hedge.

At the moment, this cost falls entirely upon the landlord or tenant, as the case may be, but presumably after September, when the new capital improvement grants scheme comes into operation, thirty-three and a third per cent of the charge for this item will be recoverable from the Ministry. As most of the hedges about which I am writing have ditches requiring this treatment, I shall obviously hold my hand until the autumn.

Gate Reduction

Incidentally, another bugbear of the over-hedged farm is the number of gates requiring maintenance or renewal. On one occasion, feeling that the gates on this particular tract of land were due for replacement, I made a census, and to my astonishment found there were twenty. Or, in terms of £.s.d. at current prices, about two hundred pounds' worth of replacements were required. When the redundant hedges are removed, the number will be reduced to five, with a correspondingly lower claim on the farm account for rehabilitation.

The Two Hunts

Of how much value to a Hunt is the co-operation of the men who farm within its boundaries? Of considerable value, I should have thought; in fact, well nigh indispensable. Yet the difference in the degree of effort which different Hunt Committees are prepared to direct to assuring this co-operation is remarkable. Farming, as I do, two blocks of land, each in the area of a different Hunt, I am presented with this anomolous position: the one Hunt—for obvious reasons both shall be nameless—could not take more trouble to keep its farmers happy. Printed Fixture Lists arrive regularly, complimentary tickets and Paddock Badges for the point-to-point are forthcoming without any prompting and invitations for the farmers' hunt supper are automatically despatched every year, an event requiring no personal expenditure other than the cost of getting to the local market town.

But what of their neighbours over their southern boundary? Not a murmur do we hear from them. If the Committee are aware of the existence of the men who make their sport possible, they give no sign, and conversely, were it not common knowledge that the Hunt is in being, and hounds occasionally run over one's land, we in our turn should be ignorant of the existence of any such organisation. A curious contrast indeed, and if this Hunt lacks the support and funds necessary to emulate the good will of its neighbouring pack, the reason is not hard to find.

Field Sports and the Army

Today (July 24) is the publication date for the White Paper setting out the future constitution of our Defence Forces. Such an event may, at first sight, have little bearing on life in the countryside in general, and our field sports in particular. But I, for one, would disagree with any such contention. Traditionally, the officers of Her Majesty's Forces, the Army in particular, have for the most part been enthusiastic participants in our field sports, for fairly obvious reasons. Many of these men come from homes with a country background where fishing, hunting, and shooting form the natural relaxation of their kind. Those who do not, in all probability, soon become interested by virtue of the excellent opportunities for such pastimes afforded in both home and foreign stations, particularly the latter.

Even in the less palmy days since the last war I have heard of many Regimental Depots in this country which run their own syndicate shoots, and where this is not so, officers frequently get together to form their own small private syndicates. Notwithstanding mechanisation, many Hunts can still show a good sprinkling of officers from the local Cavalry Depot, mounted as often as not by the "pool" system, operated by the Regimental Mess.

It has often been said that a shout of "Mac," directed down the engine-room hatch of any ship, in any corner of the globe, will elicit a reply from an oil-smeared Scot, and it is probably equally true that a shout of "Colonel" at the door of any fishing or shooting hotel bar will cause at least one occupant to lift his face from his glass. Let us hope that this will long be so, and that the new order, with its tendency to turn the khaki- and blue-clad figures of our service officers into overalled boffins will not slowly deplete a class of men who hitherto have loved the things readers of this paper rate so high.

Two Separate Harvests

Farmers who sowed both spring and winter varieties of corn this season look like having two quite separate harvests on their hands in this neighbourhood. The mildish winter, followed by a wet spring, suited the winter crop well, and has resulted in a forward, good looking stand of corn, most of which, I predict, will be in the granary by the time these words appear. But the same weather considerably delayed sowings of spring corn, and much of it is only just starting to turn colour as I write.

With the best of conditions from now on, this grain can hardly be ready for the combine before mid-September. Indeed, our spring barley is still as green as the day it first appeared above ground; but it carries a good ear and sufficient straw, so given reasonable sunshine I see no reason why it should not yield a full if rather late crop. I certainly hope it does, because several of my friends told me I was wasting the seed when I sowed it, and it is always satisfactory to prove such know-alls wrong!

Co-operation is invaluable between farmers and the Hunt.

Wildfowl in Canada

"A good and early first hatch is now in sight, but dwindling surface waters in western Saskatchewan and central Alberta pose a threat to later hatches . . . Copious rains are needed in these and other areas . . . To match the outstanding production success of the past two years, we need the late July and early August hatch from late nesters and re-nesters." These are highlight excerpts from the July issue of the Ducks Unlimited (Canada) *Duckological*.

Terming the current report as one of "veiled optimism," Cartwright, who proposed the report and is chief naturalist, warns that continued deterioration of surface waters in Alberta and Saskatchewan leaves success of the season's second-half hatch in some doubt. He pinpoints the fact that the breeding stock started nesting operations two to three weeks earlier than last year as a primary reason for the generally excellent first hatch.

The report states that in drought-stricken southern Alberta, where D.U.'s irrigation-fed projects and other man-made impoundments are "scattered through like plums in a pudding," large broods of duck and Canada geese are gracing the waters "in heart-warming abundance." Despite the lack of natural sloughs and potholes, a lot of duck and geese will come out of this area.

Admitting that the overall picture is slightly obscure at the moment, Cartwright forsees no serious drought loss. He reminds readers that surface water conditions over the entire prairies have been excellent for a number of years. He adds: "This year's recession over large areas of Saskatchewan and Alberta is more nearly a return to normal. In these areas, D.U. projects are paying off in a big way."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters and photographs are invited for this page. They should be as brief as possible, and the names and addresses of senders must be given, though these need not necessarily be published. Correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, The Shooting Times & Country Magazine, 29 Old Bond Street, London, W.1. 'Phone: HYDe Park 2556/2557.

PIGEON'S NEST ON THE GROUND

Sir,—Last week, whilst stalking roe in the Lammermuir Hills in East Lothian, I watched two pigeon visiting a clump of ferns in a small clearing in the middle of a pine forest. I was greatly surprised to find a nest in the roots of the fern clump.

The nest was made of twigs, cup-shaped and lined with roots; nothing like the normal platform of twigs that is usually associated with a wood-pigeon's nest. The nest contained two squabs about a week old. It was impossible for the eggs to have fallen from a tree as the nearest tree was over twenty yards away.

I have never seen this before, or heard of it. The lack of nesting sites cannot be the reason, so I was wondering if this was unusual. Perhaps other readers would care to comment?

JAGER,
West Lothian.

WILDFOWL TAXIDERMY

Sir,—It was with the keenest of interest that I read Dr. James M. Harrison's excellent article on the above subject.

As a mere beginner, with only some eight years' experience, I feel myself scarcely qualified to make any criticism upon such a master of this difficult art. Nevertheless, I should be interested to know Dr. Harrison's opinion concerning the matter of the opening incision on the bird. Surely it is far better to make this cut beneath the wing, either right or left, instead of down the breast, as the latter will invariably in the hands of an amateur leave an obvious overlapping mark when the bird is sown up, also it is so easy to pierce the entrails which will stain the feathers.

Though it would appear that skinning from beneath the wing would be difficult, it will be found in practice that it is a very simple method, the obvious advantage being that the incision is covered by the wing.

I also wonder if Dr. Harrison has any idea of the number of people, apart from professionals, who still practise this art. It might be very illuminating. At any rate, many thanks to Dr. Harrison for having brought forward this interesting subject.

W. A. JACKSON,
B.F.P.O. 21.

BROWN CORVINES

Sir,—In reply to Colin Drage, Abbots Ripton, Hunts. (issue August 2) who wants to know about colour abnormality in some birds, the answer is as follows.

The cause of this abnormality is due to the "watering down" of the natural black (melann) pigments. Sometimes only a few of the feathers are affected, resulting in a pied bird—in which white feathers are mixed with the normal plumage. So far, no satisfactory explanation has been found to account for these variations, or for the failure of some birds to produce the normal amount of pigment.

There is an abnormality found in some blackbirds, sparrows, and swallows in which the plumage turns white. This is due to the *absence* of natural pigments in the skin, hair and feathers so that they appear white or abnormally pale.

The eyes are peculiarly affected: the iris is a pale rose colour, and the pupil bright red, owing to the absence of pigmentium nigrum, the colouring matter of the eye membrane.

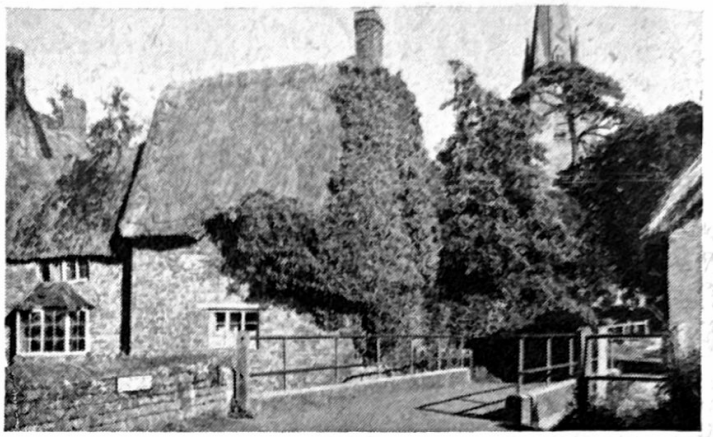
D. BEACON,
Staffs.

DOG CLOSE

Sir,—I enclose a photograph taken at Adderbury, Oxfordshire, near the end of Dog Close—which I fear may have been "developed" since—but the words are just legible, bottom left. Goose Moors are common enough in the English countryside, and even London has such names as Birdcage Walk, Haymarket and Covent Garden. Birmingham has a Bull Ring, and I certainly recall a Butter Walk (Totnes or Dartmouth?) and possibly a Horse Fair. But surely dogs and cats, cows and ponies have been rather meanly treated by those who name streets?

Incidentally, I remember reading a year or two ago that residents in one place objected to some such name as Hog Lane. Presumably Dog Close would excite no comparable resentment, though in the past dogs were less highly and warmly regarded than they are today.

COUNTRY BUMPKIN,
Somerset.



An unusual street name at Adderbury. (See letter "Dog Close.")

A STRANGE CHARACTER

Sir,—I am sending you a snapshot of a strange character I met shooting. He had no clothes on, and was sitting on a rock staring at his gun, shooting-stick and cartridge-bag; he had a most preoccupied air and a very large pheasant in his hair.

I feel sure I've forgotten something.

He was muttering, "I feel sure I've forgotten something."

G. L. CARLISLE,
Goring-on-Thames.

SHOOTING IN RUSSIA

Sir,—I was highly interested to read Mr. Arnold's article entitled as above, but I am most disappointed as I was given such a different picture by a member of their Embassy at Bisley this year. It is a pity that there is such a divergence of opinion.

I was told by this very courteous and pleasant young man, who seemed very surprised that we had to buy our own rifles and ammunition and had to pay to enter competitions, that if a group of people in Russia wish to shoot smallbore, all they have to do is to ask their local "Commissar of Sport" and they get a free range built for themselves, they get free rifles and pistols, they get free targets, they get free ammunition and free advice and free instruction.

I must admit that I got the idea that the weapons were "properly looked after" and "cleaned and oiled," by whom he did not say, but it did occur to me that it would be awfully jolly if we could get *our* local police to clean and oil *ours*.

I was just on the point of leaving the Free Weapons Range to look after itself for ever; for I am sure there was a passport and visa waiting in his pocket already for me; when someone came to say that it was time *we* got cleaned up and oiled, and the weather being what it was and human nature being what it is, I decided for the bird in the hand.

But I still do not know the truth of it.

W. H. FULLER,
New Barnet.

[Mr. W. H. Fuller is the N.S.R.A. Range Officer for Positional Shooting at Bisley.—Ed.]

HANDGUN BALLISTICS AND FULLBORE FRUSTRATION

Sir,—A moral to be drawn from the letters of Messrs. Shorrock and King is that, until we learn from the foreigner, we shall lag in the race.

It is now admitted that Elmer Keith, ex-cowpuncher and trapline rider of Idaho, is the father of the mighty .44 Remington Magnum cartridge. I was communcating with Keith over 20 years ago, at which time he was already loading the .44 S and W Special cartridge to the maximum allowable in the .44 revolver, not far from 1,000 ft. lb. At that time I had developed the .45 long Colt cartridge to the maximum permissible in New Service arms, a little under 800 ft. lb. or slightly over the standard energy of the .44 Winchester cartridge fired from a rifle. These energies were developed purely and simply for killing dangerous game such as jaguar and peccary at close ranges, and were extremely effective.

It is thanks to private handloaders such as Keith that the revolver has been developed in America to its present pitch. Neither he nor I were ever interested in self-loaders, because, as Mr. Shorrock says, they are made for a standard pressure.

Turning to Mr. King's letter, we should first discard the weary old .303, which has been obsolete since before it was adopted in the 19th century. The only thing we can do with this old case is to neck it down as the Australians do, to .22 and .25, in which guise it makes a good varminter, though nowhere comparable to such cartridges as the .222 Remington or 6.5x.257 Roberts.

All reports I have from American custom barrel-makers indicate that the .308 WCF or Nato cartridge cannot be developed further. It is too tricky, and will not make the grade in the realm of supreme accuracy, even when handloaded. They seem to think that the calibre of the future is a 6mm. or 6.5mm. necked down from some larger case such as the 30/06, and many of them are working on this.

From Russia we have something to learn about rifles. Bogdanov's tools have a very thick barrel with a two-inch barrel-shank screwing into a very heavy octagonal one-shot receiver, making for great rigidity. I believe that a B.S.A. barrel left in the thick with long shank screwed into such a receiver would make the grade either in the Olympic Games or on the Bench Rest.

But until we learn that carefully hand-loaded ammunition with hand-pressed jacketed bullets must always be far more accurate than the best factory-made match ammunition, we shall get nowhere. It is an acknowledged fact that all improvements over the past thirty years in American sporting and target weapons and their cartridges are due to private individuals who loaded their own and had the curiosity to experiment.

C. W. THURLOW CRAIG,
Meifod, Montgomeryshire.

THE VANISHED PIGEON

Sir,—One day last November, after a fall of snow which was very light, my friend and I were out on a day's rough shooting, when I brought down a pigeon which was an easy 25 yards' crossing shot, the bird turned in mid-air, to a left full choked barrel. It fell about 15 yards away to my right, and lay there "stone dead." I walked over to retrieve it, not having my dog.

I bent down to pick it up, and it had vanished. It did not fly away, or "run." We looked round for about half-an-hour for it.

Could any of your readers suggest what happened to it.

S. A. JENKINS and
J. A. WILKINSON,
Whitchurch, Shropshire.

New Books

Autumn Journey, by Edwin Way Teale (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 25s.). Readers who saw the review in this journal of "North with the Spring" by the same author, and who read the book, will require no prodding to buy a copy of this one. The "journey" was, in fact, one of 20,000 miles, and the author travelled across the advancing front of autumn from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast of America, and everywhere on it he found and recorded the signs and activities of the changing season. And these signs were almost countless, ranging from the great movements of clouds and the migration of vast flocks of birds, to the minute details of insects and grasses. To all these he brings the insight and knowledge of a great naturalist.

His journey took him through the infinitely varied autumns of the land, through mountains, deserts,, rain-forests, and beside the sea. It sent him flying down ridges with the migrating hawks, descending into submarine jungles of eel-grass, following the trail of a pioneer naturalist along a warbler river, spending a day with fern gatherers in a forest of giants.

This is a great and richly-colourful book, illustrated with first-rate photographs. But the most interesting chapter to our wildfowler-readers will be that vividly describing the great beds of eel- or wigeon-grass (*Zostera marina*) which grew before the world-wide disease struck and all but destroyed them, and how this grass, beloved of brent geese and wigeon, and a nursery for a great variety of fish-life, is now slowly recovering and growing again throughout the coastal regions where it was once so plentiful.

The Cry of the Fish Eagle, by Peter Molloy (Michael Joseph, 21s.). The author was for many years a game warden in the South Sudan, administering the enforcement of the game laws in a district roughly equal in size to the combined areas of France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland. Over this enormous area he travelled with his wife assembling information about tribal life and animals. His knowledge is probably unequalled, and unlikely to be matched in the foreseeable future.

In this book he sums up his experiences, and these will be as much appreciated by the ordinary reader as by the naturalist. His story is illustrated by between forty and fifty photographs taken by himself and his wife which are unique.

Most certainly this book is a worthy memorial to the devotion of the British game wardens of the Sudan.

History Round London, by Norman Hillson (Herbert Jenkins, 21s.). This is a companion volume to the author's "Discovering London," reviewed last year in this journal. Like that most successful book, the present one is planned in the form of tours which can be undertaken from London in the course of a day. Also like "Discovering London" a characteristic of this book is the three hundred line drawings by Will Farrow which are set in the margins against the relevant text. Thus, every major historical feature that Mr. Hillson describes is accompanied by a pictorial illustration, making recognition on sight simple and certain.

The author begins with intimate description of what is to be seen on either side of the Thames, up-river to Hampton Court Palace, and down-river to Greenwich; both trips being taken by motor launch from Charing Cross or Westminster Pier. This is followed by visits to Windsor Castle and Eton College; to Oxford; Cambridge; Canterbury; St. Albans; Winchester; the Shakespeare Country; and, finally, to Brighton.

This is no ordinary, dry-as-dust guide book. Mr. Hillson is a well-known author and historian, and certainly no professional guide ever held his audience so enthralled, for he not only writes about famous places and the things of interest to be found there, but is intimately acquainted both with the history and present set-up of his subjects.

The Herring and Its Fishery by W. C. Hodgson (Routledge and Kegan Paul). Dr. Hodgson, who was a pioneer in the forecasting of fisheries, in the use of echo-sounding in pelagic fisheries, and chairman of the Herring Committee of the International Council, has written a topical book, for the future of our great East Anglian Fishery is uncertain. The evidence, however, is that the future is anything but bright, for although the herring stock of the southern North Sea has been capable of feeding a large part of Europe's human population for hundreds of years, it has yet to be proved that it can also support Europe's livestock.

Dr. Hodgson avoids technical language and tells simply the story of the herring, where it lives, how it is caught and what happens to it after it has been landed.

Who would have thought that such a "common" fish could prove so interesting or cause such concern?

20th. Century Bestiary (Bell, 13s. 6d.). The editors of the *Scientific American* have prepared a series of short books on specific areas of science. The books are based on contemporary articles from the magazine, written in non-technical English by leading scientists from all over the world.

This particular volume contains 24 articles, with potted biographies of the authors, and covering such subjects as: "The Spider and the Wasp"; "Courtship of Animals"; "The Home Life of the Swift"; "Language of the Bees"; "Bird Aerodynamics"; "Birds as Flying Machines"; "Spiders Webs and Drugs"; "Curiosity in Monkeys," etc., etc.

An excellent and instructive book this, which also contains a short Bibliography of books on the subjects covered by the articles.

Keeping a Dog, by Major R. F. Wall, T.D., M.R.C.V.S. (A. and C. Black, 12s. 6d.). This, the fifth edition of the book (the sub-title is "Its Training and Care in Health and Sickness"), has been reset in a larger format, and completely revised. There are new sections on the transport of dogs and on their exposure to radio-activity.

"Keeping a Dog" is a practical and non-technical book for everyone who possesses or contemplates possessing a dog. Some of the subjects covered are: discussing the points of a dog; signs and warnings in purchasing; housing; feeding; exercise and general management; birth and rearing of puppies; recognition and treatment of common diseases. The author is one of the most experienced vets. in the country.

The Practical Angler, by W. C. Stewart (A. and C. Black, 10s. 6d.). The centenary edition of a classic of angling literature. When it was first published it was accepted as the only work in which trout fishing had ever been scientifically expounded, and so sound and practical is the fishing sense which it contains, that it has never been out of print.

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THE BACKING CARD

by W. H. Fuller

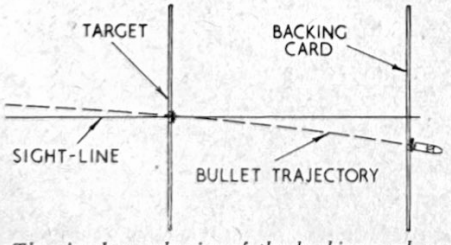
NEWCOMERS and visitors to Open Small-bore Prize Meetings are often intrigued and perhaps puzzled to know why a plain piece of white card the same size as that of the target is placed behind each and why it is returned after the shooting with the target to the statistical officer.

The original function of the backing card was to provide assistance in spotting shot holes at the longer ranges through perhaps indifferent telescopes and it is still very helpful in that role although very efficient 'scopes are available nowadays at very reasonable prices. The present day function of the backing card is to provide proof of cross-shooting, where one competitor puts a shot on the card of another and is penalised for doing so. It also prevents double cross-shooting or rather it brings it to light, where a competitor having made an error induces his neighbour to return the compliment. The answer is not a solution, except that a couple of lemons are involved one of whom may involve himself in partial or complete disqualification from a meeting. Then, with the tremendous advance in shooting equipment resulting in tighter and tighter groups the backing card now performs another function, that of a discriminator of double shot-holes which are not recognisable as such on the front target card.

I cannot remember having seen or heard mentioned the name of the giant of ingenuity who first converted the inoffensive sight-assisting backing card to its present fell purpose of catching the unfortunate competitor who makes a mistake and has to pay a shilling for it and provides stats' officers with another excuse for knocking off another point, not that their particular, peculiar and sadistic outlook needs any further incentive. If this giant of ingenuity, if he ever existed, has passed on, he must hold the record for being turned over in his grave. If he has not yet, then he will do.

Supreme and Pitiless

Perhaps someone like Richard Arnold who loves raking up past history and records could give us the information, but then perhaps it might be better if he did not. In providing damning evidence of the cross shot, the backing card is supreme and pitiless. It is one of those things in shooting which works according to the book, which is a pity, because it is about the only thing which does. I often think that Small-bore Bisley should properly finish up by burning his effigy over a pile of shot-up backing cards, stoked by all those who have been

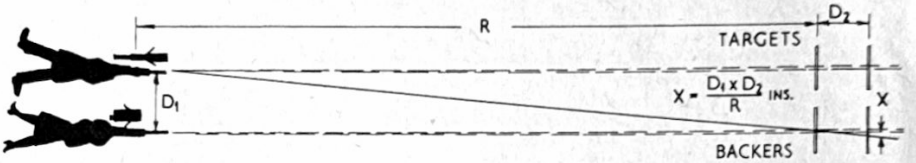


The simple mechanics of the backing card used as an aid to sighting.

stung for a shilling by the stats' officer. As some of my readers may have guessed I have suffered lately. However . .

On club ranges it is usually the practice to reface shot out butts with the whitest sand available in the locality. Light falling on the sand reflects light onto the backs of the targets and so through the shot holes which can then be clearly seen. Where this is not possible or practicable a shot card back to front is placed about fifteen inches behind the target to serve the same purpose. Due to the trajectory of the falling bullet it passes through the backing card below the level of the shot hole in the target card. The line of sight being perfectly straight, the white of the backing card can be seen through the hole in the target card, both holes concerned being out of line vertically. The side off-setting of the telescope also adds its quota. My little drawing in Fig. 1 shows the conditions graphically.

Every picture tells a story and in this case far better than trying to tell it. I do not care to start to count the number of times I have drawn it before, either as a competitor consoling another unfortunate or as a stats' officer getting the last ounce out of my victim. There is a peculiar satisfaction in being able to sketch and it reaches its height when one is able to do it on the very piece of evidence which brought the fly in.



Cross Shooting Calculations. R is the length of the range in inches. D1 is the distance between the shooters in inches. This may vary according to the exact position of the shooters but it may vary quite a lot without upsetting the rough estimation on the backing cards. If the firing points are properly numbered and the range officer sees that the marksmen have their telescopes over the number, the usual range rule, the stats' officer will have no difficulty in allocating cross- shooting correctly. D2 is the distance between the targets and the backing cards. X is the displacement of the defaulting shot on the backing card. Example: Range 25-yards, distance between firers 4ft., distance between targets and backers 15in.

$$X = \frac{15 \times 48}{900} = \cdot 8 \text{ inches}$$

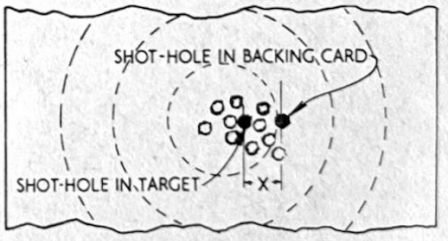
Fig. 2 shows the set-up in plan of two adjacent firing-points, targets and backing cards. The solid line shows the left-hand marksman putting a shot on to the right-hand target whilst the dotted lines show the normal flight-lines of the bullets going into the correct targets. The defaulting bullet being shot at an angle, passes through the target card at an angle and strikes the backing card out of line with the straight flight-lines. When the cards come into the hands of the stats' officer, he sees eleven shots on one of them, but he does not immediately assume that there has been cross-shooting. The competitor may have put eleven shots on the card. He deals with this card first and mates the corresponding backing card with it. All shots fired by the same competitor will be in register with each other and if light appears through all the shot holes then eleven shots were fired from the same firing-point. If ten of the holes register and one does not, then the stats' officer makes a pencil mark through the odd hole on to the backing card, scores the card and passes it on for recording.

A Lot of Trouble

He then looks at the backing card and estimates the distance between the pencil mark and the shot hole which is out-of-pattern with those on the target card. From previous experience, from test cards or from calculated figures he decides that the defaulting shot was fired from such and such a firing-point. He checks on this card for nine shots and scores it in accordance. There may be ten shots on it, in which case the competitor responsible may find himself in trouble for firing the eleventh shot.

Some ranges, used at various times for Open Meetings, keep on file a set of test cards for the guidance of stats' officers. However, this practical record requires a considerable amount of preparation and shooting as I once found to my cost, when I started out with the highest intentions on my own range which has eight firing-points at each of the three distances. First of all eight targets and backing cards were placed in the frames at twenty-five yards and one shot fired from each point. I then wandered down the range and marked these eight shots "0" as a zero register. I then returned to firing-point No. 1 and fired seven more shots, one at each of the other cards. These were marked off "1" on each backing card. Then seven more shots were fired from firing-point No. 2 and so on. After four of the firing-points had been shot I found that the centres of the targets had been so blown away that the original reference was unrecognisable. So I decided to start again, but this time moving the sights to depress or elevate succeeding shots out of each other's way. At the end of the afternoon I decided to call it a day and have to admit that the fifty and one-hundred yard ranges have never been completed or even started. There is the mathematical way of doing the job, which is far easier, far more comfortable and much less costly. Fig. 2 shows the measurements which are required and the little formula in the middle answers the question.

There is no need to make calculations for each firing point and target, providing that there are not large differences in distance between them. Neither is there any need to make allowances where the targets are closer together than the firing-points and where the outside shooters fire at an angle. The difference in the shot spacing on the backing card is very small compared with the range and this is particularly so at the longer ranges.



Cross Shooting Example. The ten legitimate shot holes in the backing card will exactly match those in the target. The difference between the defaulting shot in the target and that on the backing card indicates in steps of fractions of an inch (X as in Fig. 2) the position on the firing point from which the shot came.

A backing card is very helpful to the stats' officer in deciding whether two shots have passed through one hole or only one. It is thought that the second bullet passing through a hole already made by a previous bullet will be slightly deflected or that the first bullet in forcing its way through the card suffers either deflection or retardation or both, whereas the second bullet goes straight through without restriction. Whatever actually happens the back-

ing card usually shows clear markings of two bullets in such cases.

A case came to my notice recently where a competitor was penalised ten points for what looked and checked as a nine-shot card. The target was shot in The National League by a competitor who does not miss the target at all, nor the ten-ring very often. As the target was scored by the N.S.R.A. official scorers, who surely know their business better than anyone else, a dead-lock developed. The "irresistible force meeting the immovable object" kind of situation, with all due respect, with the odds in favour of the latter. The club concerned now adopts the commonsense practice of using backing cards with all their medium and long-range competition cards.

This is not done to cock a snook at the ruling body, but to assist everyone in reaching a fair decision. At the same time it provides certain evidence to the competitor that all ten of his shots did reach the target. Every marksman is always fully aware that he may be the unfortunate one to pick the one round in ten million which will never get there, but he prefers to know of it rather than have his confidence shaken either in his equipment or in his statistical officer.

In some clubs it is the thing never to query a decision of any stats' officer, but I am not quite sure that it is quite fair to a member, particularly if he is shooting to a very high average. I am sure that every experienced stats' officer will agree with me on this.

When in Doubt

The club in question do not use a full sized backing card each time. They have a full sized card permanently fixed in the backing frame and then use a small piece of card cut to about four-inches square stuck on with adhesive paper strip, in line with the centre of the aiming mark on the target card. This is replaced for each target card. If there is any doubt about there being or not being ten shots on the target card the small backing card is enclosed when the cards are sent to the scorers. If ten shots are clearly recognisable the check piece is not sent. Almost any piece of card will do for a backer. Old shot cards can be used and if existing shot holes get in the way the card can be turned round backwards for it is quite easy to recognise which way shots have passed through a card.

I once had to score a card, the backing card of which had five holes going through the card one way and five coming through the other. This was a bit of a poser until I was told that it had been blown out by the wind half way through the shoot and when it was replaced under the instruction of the range officer it had been put in backwards. There was a story going round Bisley this year of a competitor at a Prize Meeting who only had nine shots on his target, had fired ten rounds, but was credited with a possible. The answer was that the target card had been flipped up by the wind just as the competitor fired, the bullet had slipped underneath the edge and then the card had flipped back into place. The story goes on to say that the competitor did not see the card flip as he had got his eye glued to his sights, but an onlooker did. On appeal they found ten shots on the backing card, the missing one dead in line with where the ten-ring should have been, so he got the credit for it.

As some of my Scottish friends say to me "Cor blime the noo."

All I can think of in reply to that one is, "Well, did you ever."

A NATURAL PROBLEM

by David Stone

I WILL not claim that our club is by way of being an exception simply because every member of it is apparently capable of, and what is more, repeatedly threatens to write a book for the benefit of all shooters. The subject of this potential library would of course be, "How To Become a Marksman."

Strangely enough, in spite of this veritable surfeit of talent at our disposal, our club remains just another club struggling along and managing a quite ordinary proportion of successes and failures with its shooting.

Personally, I feel that my skill, or lack of it, qualifies me to exclude myself from that elite group of authors-to-be. Nevertheless I do often ask that perplexing question, "How is a marksman made?" Is it good initial instruction in the sport, continual practice, or is the ability simply born in him?

Should they ever put pen to paper, a fair percentage of our experts would devote much of their books to advocating practice, practice and still more practice until the desired standard was reached. Having reached it, then still more and continuous practice to maintain that standard. All in all, a deadly serious and monotonous business it seems to me.

Others will advise the soaking up of the theory of shooting before one so much as looks at a range or a gun. Then there is still another group which emphatically advises that the first necessity is the very best quality equipment. The latter is a very desirable thing, but a bit hard on the pocket.

The confusing aspect of all this is, that if you are observant enough, you will find that each of these theories is proved right in practice on the range! You will see the fellow who shoots night after night to stay at the top, and if he does have a bad spell, why, he will just shoot and shoot still more until he has shot himself out of it.

I will warrant that there is at least one member of your own club who is a prolific reader of literature devoted to the technique of shooting; the theorist, who is also one of your best shots. And I'll stake my shirt (after Ascot that is all I have left to stake) that you also have the equipment crank who possesses an "international," the best of telescopes, pads, jacket, etc., who also uses the best of ammunition and cleans the grease off it before firing, and has an average about ninety-nine point nine!

But then you will point out old Bill Jones perhaps — every club has one — who is the inevitable exception to the rule. In our case that there is always the member who just could not care less about his equipment, has never read a written or printed word on the subject of shooting, has never received any instruction and certainly has never seriously practised. When he shoots he obviously just does not care what sort of score he gets, but just to confound the critics, more often than not he gets that elusive "ton."

What then, should the indifferent shot like myself do to improve? If you are not a "natural," can you hope that by continuous practice, or by any other means, you will ever reach the Master Shot standard?

☆ ☆

The Yorkshire Meeting

by Stats

ALL prize meetings have some characteristic of their own or they would soon lose the support of the enthusiasts. The Yorkshire Meeting fulfils the requirements for National Classification and also offers an interesting programme of events by including a competition on International targets at 50 and 100 yards together with "decimal carton" shoots. It is also unique among All-comers Meetings in that there is a challenge trophy for every event on the programme.

The Knostrop Range, headquarters of the Leeds Association, must be the finest in the county although such was the entry that even the ample firing accommodation there was a little strained at times. But waiting lists are often created because those competitors to whom a meeting is something of an adventure cannot bring themselves to depart from the system of starting at the bottom and working up. Because of this, there was a delay in getting a place at 50 yards on Sunday morning and at 100 yards in the afternoon.

Not that waiting about caused any hardship. An abundance of leisure makes for a friendly gathering and at Knostrop it provided the opportunity to eat, drink and chat outside the refreshment hut. Only the striped awning was lacking to give a truly continental air.

Saturday was not the time for such pleasures, however, for the end of the Test match at Headingly gave the signal for a cloudburst and a fair drop of the water reached our side of Leeds. But the weather-wise sat supping tea and gleefully flexing their trigger fingers as they confidently anticipated the wind to drop with the end of the storm. And drop it did — to the advantage of those in the know. Even the keen member of a prominent midland club, who sat down heavily in the wet, still retained his enthusiasm.

Among those who travelled from afar were Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Leslie of St. Nicholas R.C., Mr. and Mrs. R. N. Martin of Sunderland R.C. and Granville Watson the Durham County Captain who was close behind Birmingham's Arthur Skinner in the Aggregate. Incidentally, City of Birmingham took only one team this year, but whether it was last year's victorious "B" team or the losing "A," the Captain would not disclose. Anyway, with four internationals it was not surprising that the team won, particularly since the total was 798.

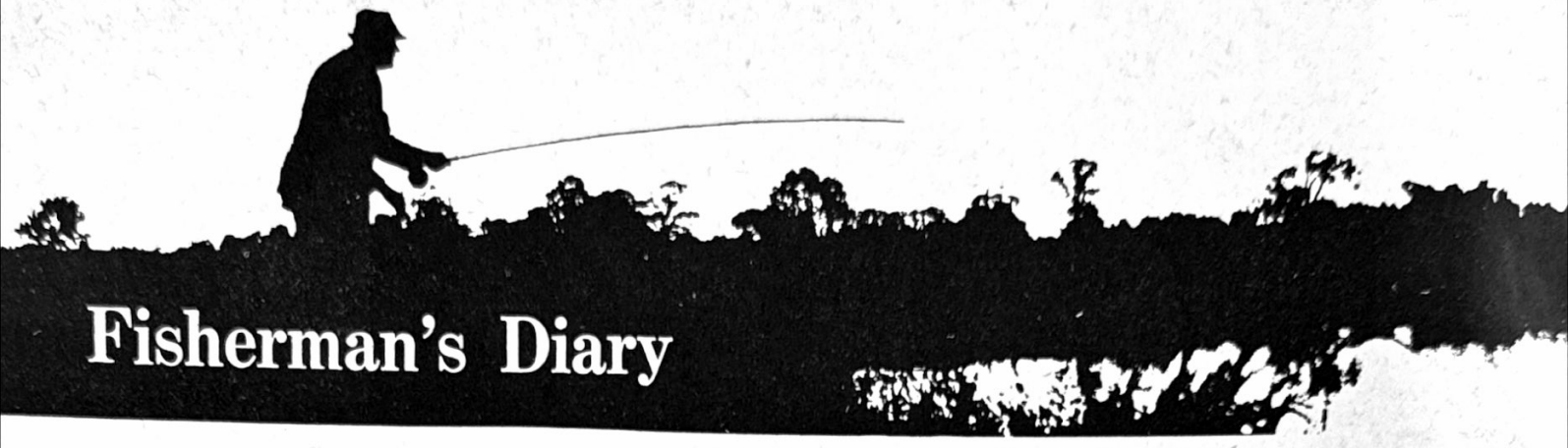
Results—Scarborough Corporation Cup, County Championship: D. A. Thomas, 792. B.S.A. Cup: D. King, 400.29x. A. V. Staniforth Cup: A. D. Skinner, 397. Scarborough Townsmen's Cup: A. D. Skinner, 200.20x. Behrens Cup: C. C. Sonley, 200.14x. Bergson Cup, Championship of Meeting: A. D. Skinner, 1194.26.

Class B— N.S.R.A. Cup: M. Caines, 399. "Ladies" Cup: E. Iredale, 394. Doncaster Plaque: A. Scott, 200.17x. Rolls Royce Plaque, E. Jago, 199.12x. Popplewell Cup: E. Jago, 1187.26.

Class C—Parker-Hale Cup: R. Jackson, 397. Sutcliffe Plaque: R. Ridsdale, 200. Priestman Recreation Plaque: F. Robinson, 197. Sir Hugh Bell Cup: C. M. Sankey, 793.

Class D— W. J. Bull Cup: K. Fletcher, 395. Sheffield Plaque: J. T. Ainsley, 199. Tindall Cup: G. Wimblett, 200. Legard Cup: K. Fletcher, 789.

Teams—Robson Cup: City of Birmingham R.C., 798. Lady Blake Cup—Sharpshooter: Hull "B". Police—Potter Cup: E. Jago. Barnsley Co-operative Shield: North Riding Constabulary.



Fisherman's Diary

by Coridon

I HAVE just read an article in which the author says it is necessary for an Englishman to learn an entirely new vocabulary if he wants to understand American angling literature.

That surely cannot be true. In descriptions of American fishing there are several things—the names of fish among them—that are foreign to us. A bucktail is a commonplace to the American and a puzzle to British readers, but that and other expressions like it are purely American. In the literature of general angling British and American expressions are almost the same. I regularly read *Field and Stream*, and a good many American sporting books come to my notice. I have no difficulty in understanding them.

As a matter of interest I looked carefully through a vocabulary of American angling terms, and when I came to the final item, "Whip finish," I was surprised to find how much was not only English, but long-established English. The early settlers took their jargon with them, and the terms used by Barker and Walton still make sense in the United States.

Important divergences are few. One, I think, is fairly well known. In America the length of whatever it may be that joins reel line to hook or lure is known as the leader, whether in fresh or salt water. This is a sensible term which a few British writers (T. C. Ivens among them) have tried to bring into favour here. We use the words trace and cast. the first would be reasonable enough if it were invariably used, but it alternates with cast, and a cast in the leader sense can be confused with making a cast, *i.e.*, the act of casting. Let us have leader!

Other differences are almost negligible. Our multiplying reels are bait-casting or level-wind reels; and our fixed-spool reels are simply known as spinning reels. The definition of game fish is very different from that accepted by British anglers; but those appear to be all.

Poaching

It has for long been felt by certain sections of anglers in England and Wales that the penalties for river poaching are too light and that something approximating to the Scottish legal code on the subject would be justified.

A practical move in this direction has been made by the Southern Area Advisory Committee of the Devon River Board which, at a meeting held on July 26, adopted a proposal asking the authorities "to consider extending to English rivers the Scottish law now applying to poachers."

Thomas Telford

Telford was born in August, 1757, and his bi-centenary is marked by an exhibition staged by the Institute of Civil Engineers.

Telford was an engineer in the modern sense, and among his achievements were the Menai Straits bridge and the Clyde bridge at Glasgow. He laid down roads in the Highlands of Scotland and was responsible for many port and harbour constructions and improvements. He was too late for the heyday of canal building—Brindley started work on the Bridgwater Canal a year before Telford was born—but he did not neglect this branch of engineering, and present day anglers catch fish in several waters which he created.

Salmon and Sea Trout

Every season sees an increase in the number of anglers who fish for salmon and sea trout, a few of them new to angling of any kind but the majority coming from trout or coarse fishing to try their hands on the migratory fish.

There is always, therefore, a group of anglers who have difficulty in distinguishing between salmon and sea trout, and recent correspondence on the subject in the angling Press prompts me to repeat here an ancient piece of doggerel that may appeal to those who can correctly remember such things. Personally, I usually get the lines mixed up and do or think the opposite of the intention.

From the back of the adipose fin you count
The scales to the lateral line.
If from 14 to 16 these amount
A sea trout must surely be thine.
A salmon has much larger scales and so
Nine or ten will complete the row.

"The Art of Angling"

Not, this time, the one of 1577 about which I have written recently, but a completely new work of considerable magnitude which was "launched" at a Press Party by the publishers (The Caxton Publishing Co. Ltd.) at Morley Hall, their Hanover Square establishment.

"Auceps" was present, and he has described the gathering in detail. It remains for me to say only that the work, in three lavishly illustrated volumes (edited by Kenneth Mansfield, supported by 27 well-known contributors) will be reviewed in these pages in due course.

Collective Nouns

This is not the shade of Nesfield arisen to torment us in our latter days but a note on the use of one word to cover a number of things.

Comment has been made about my use in the last year or so (since I discovered it) of the word "arthropod." When first encountered, it sent me to the dictionary, and it seems that others have been put to the same bother. None the less, when writing about angling it is a useful word for it embraces insects, crustaceans, spiders, and their many allied groups. The only alternative is a string of names or the rather vague word "creatures."

Another string of angling terms is made up of spinners, wagtails, devons, spoons, etc. "Lures" is almost the only single word that embraces them all, but it goes further than the writer often intends, because, strictly used, it can cover anything put on a hook (including artificial flies) to attract fish.

I mention the point because this morning I referred to "Where to Fish" and came across the word, "tinbaits." It is an ugly expression but it covers a fine collection of angling ironmongery. It may already have wide acceptance, but it is the first time I have come across it.

Three Cwt. of Salmon

When I read a news item to the effect that an American angler, Mr. Sampson Field, had caught in one night 17 salmon weighing in all 375lb. on the Norwegian River Alta, I cut it out with a view to making something of it in this column.

I was deterred from elaboration by Peterborough's comment in *The Daily Telegraph*. After giving details of the catch he added: "Such catches on the Alta are remarkable but not freakish. This one falls well short of the late Duke of Westminster's catch in 1926 when he killed 33 salmon in a night, totalling 792 pounds."

The River Alta flows into the Arctic Ocean through Alten Fjord, on one of whose islands stands Hammerfest, the most northerly town in Europe.

The August Dun

This is an artificial that seems to have dropped out of popular use. I remember it in my youth but it is many years since I used one, and I cannot recall having read of it for a very long time. It is, I see, advertised in some (but by no means all) the fly catalogues.

The August Dun is an imitation of the subimago of *Ecdyonurus dispar*, a fly which hatches in considerable numbers in stone-bedded rivers and in mountain-country lakes from late July onwards. Ronalds, in "The Fly-fisher's Entomology" (1836), said that the August Dun is as important a fly in August as the March Brown is in March—and little that Ronalds wrote of a practical nature has been superseded. Thirty year later Francis wrote: "The August Dun is a capital and very general fly, somewhat resembling the March Brown but smaller. Dress it upon a No. 9 or 10 [new sizes 6 or 5]. Mr. Ronalds' pattern is pretty good — brown floss silk (he should have added 'light') ribbed with yellow for body; tail, two rabbits' whiskers . . .; wings, from a brown hen's wing; legs, red hackle, stained brown."

One State Alone!

"Colorado's national forest trout streams were visited by 1,273,895 anglers in 1956. This was an increase of 200,000 over the year before, and an all-time high. It is typical of what is happening all across the land, and yet getting funds to maintain fish and game resources in these areas is worse than pulling teeth."—*Field and Stream*, July 1957.

TEN TIMES

by J. R.

THE prolonged pursuit of a large, strong covey of partridges on September 24 last year made me wonder what the record is for the number of times that a covey has risen, pitched, and risen again without either breaking up or having its numbers much reduced by shooting.

On one of the several farms on which I shoot there were two coveys, one of twelve and the other of fifteen. Stocks of partridges being exceedingly low after three blank years, I did not intend to kill many out of these two lots, hoping that they would ultimately spread to adjoining farms where there were still none; but out of the twelve I had taken a brace and a half to provide a meal for some guests, and now I wanted a brace to give to the farmer who lets me the shooting for a small sum.

I started off at 10.15 with my yellow labrador, Annie, intending to let her range. She might put up the coveys out of shot well, but once they were up I should probably be able to mark them down or know where they had gone. The first problem was to find them in a largish area of potatoes, roots and stubble.

We worked a clover and a small potato field without finding. We then entered a 25 acre field planted with various types of roots and one patch of winter barley. We had been quartering a patch of mangolds for ten minutes when I had a bit of luck. I happened to look to my left and saw the covey of fifteen lift from some swedes and pitch in the winter barley alongside. I turned towards them; they rose far away and flew over a high hedge into another potato field.

I thought that I should get up to them in the potatoes where there was plenty of cover. Vain hope! They rose at eighty yards or so and went back over the hedge towards the big field. I followed and worked the field in the direction of their flight. I sweated up and down for at least half-an-hour before I found them in some sugar beet. I might have had a shot but they were at extreme range so I refrained, the wounding of a partridge, always extremely regrettable, being almost a crime in times of such scarcity. They pitched two hundred yards on, in the sugar beet again.

Though I felt certain of a shot this time, I made a détour so as to push them back in the direction of the big potato field, in case they did again rise out of range or I missed. My manoeuvre failed completely. Not only did they rise very wide indeed, but, so far from returning to the potatoes, they swung left and flew very fast and high over a line of young elms. The last glimpse I had of them was when they passed over a cottage several hundred yards away.

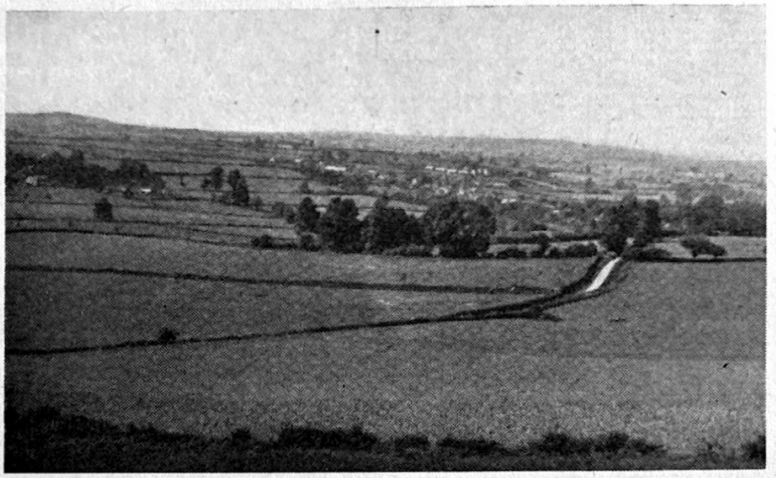
One Out of the Covey

The field beyond that cottage contained mangolds, kale, and clover. I agreed with the cowman, whom I met in the lane, that they would probably have made for this field; so I tried the mangolds, ran Annie through the kale, and having drawn both blank, turned to do a strip of the clover, with the bitch to heel. Almost at once they lifted. They were again a longish way off but I just had time to shoot one bird, an old one, as they rose across my front into what breeze there was. Instead of swinging right, towards their base, as one would have expected, they turned left downhill. I saw them cross two big grass fields and then I lost them.

I suppose that at this point I should have decided to chase those partridges no more. Anyway, it was a sultry day and I was feeling decidedly slack. But one bird — and an old one too — was not much use to my farmer friend. Moreover, I was by now very interested to see how many times I could flush them without their splitting up. So I followed.

I tried a couple of grass fields without result. No sooner had I entered a third than the covey rose by the far hedge and went on towards a big thistle-pimpled grass field.

Strictly speaking, I ought not to have entered this field, for the farmer takes his gun out about twice a year and, although I shoot his pigeon, crows and magpies for him, I leave game alone. But he is a friend of mine, and, since this covey did not belong to him, I knew that he would no more object to my following them and putting them up than I should if he did the same to me. So I removed my cartridges and went on.



Scene (in summer) of the great pursuit.

Well Out of Range

The removal of the cartridges was an unnecessary precaution. The partridges rose at least a hundred yards ahead, and I was not tempted. Again they flew straight away from their home fields and on to another farm where I have the sporting rights.

When they disappeared they were flying along the far side of a high hedge bounding another grass field two hundred yards on. "This time I believe they really will lie close," I thought, feeling sure that they would have pitched near the hedge where the grass was thick and long. They were there all right, but slowly though I walked, with Annie to heel again, they rose far in front, once more making away from home.

Another high hedge having made accurate marking impossible, I plodded on for two hundred yards and then worked Annie round some more big grass fields which lay in the general direction of their last flight. No result.

It was now 12.30 and I had been after that covey for close on two hot and steamy hours. I nearly gave it up and staggered home. Instead, I decided as a final effort to try the far left-hand corner of a big field, the rest of which we had already done. I did not expect to find them there. I thought that they would have swung right, if anything.

As we reached the corner Annie became interested in the fence. Up got a single partridge fifteen yards ahead of me, and flew straight at me, rising fast. It was too close to take in front so I let it pass. It was still rising, and, with all the time in the world to make sure of the one bird that I needed, I shot well below it with both barrels!

Too Early By a Week

I could not pause to swear — Annie was still working the fence. This time, though, it was a young cock pheasant. Too early by exactly a week — a pity, as I had never seen a pheasant there before and probably never should again.

Just as I was about to get through the fence to see if by any chance the rest of the covey was in the next field, up they rose. I had a despairing snap-shot through a gap, one that I most certainly should not have taken, for they were already at extreme range and going away from me; but two birds fell. My impression was that neither was the one at which I had fired. Both were strong runners.

Annie found the first bird quickly. I gathered it from her equally quickly and waved her out again. She took a line towards the far fence. An instant's hesitation and she was over the ditch, through the fence and racing, nose to ground, over the next field. Three quarters of the way across the bird flipped up in front of her. She cantered back with it and we turned, at last, for home.

Altogether the covey, including its first "voluntary" rise from the swedes to the winter barley, had risen ten times, and, as far as I could tell, when I last saw them they were still all together (except for the three bagged and the single bird missed) and going strong.

Measured on the Ordnance Survey map the direction of each flight and the distance, in yards, were approximately: 1st E 70, 2nd SSW 250, 3rd N 360, 4th E 200, 5th E 580, 6th NNE 700, 7th SE 350, 8th E 310, 9th ESE 380. The distance from where they first rose to where they rose last is 1 mile, 1 furlong.

I realise that this is a deplorable tale. I should not have harried the covey for so long. I excused myself with the thought that, apart from my pardonable curiosity and my need for that one more bird, it was not a question of pursuing them with a long line of beaters, dogs and guns. It was, after all, only one good bitch and a mediocre, middle-aged man against a large covey of strong, fully grown partridges.

By one o'clock, when I reached home, I was quite exhausted. Never has a pint of bitter tasted more delicious.

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Even in the best of seasons partridges are not at all plentiful in this part of south Somerset, but the above is an example, if not a particularly creditable one, which shows that one can have some sport with what there are. And when I wish that there were more partridges, I console myself with the memory of a half season's hunting that I once had in a good shooting district. All plough and not a fence worth jumping. More a penance than a pleasure!

Capercaillie

by Sea-Pie

THE first capercaillie I ever saw, more years ago than I care to remember, was in the woods not far from Blair Atholl, in Perthshire. I was lucky enough when a youngster to have an uncle who rented various properties in Scotland, and my holidays as a schoolboy often included a trip north to wherever Uncle Jim happened to be staying.

One season — it would be about fifty years ago—he had taken a fine sporting place between Blair and Kinloch Rannoch, where glens and moors slope down to the river Lyon. The pretty streams were full of brown trout, well suited to the sport of a youngster not yet elevated to the brotherhood of salmon-fishers. In order to recuperate from some childish ailment, I arrived early one spring morning at Blair Atholl station, and after what seemed an interminable drive behind a pony in the shafts of what was locally termed "the machine," arrived at the Lodge in time for lunch and a ramble with my trout-rod.

Scrambling down one of the burns which flows through the braes of Rannoch to the Lyon, my attention was suddenly attracted by two small brown eyes of sparkling brilliance at the foot of an uprooted pine-tree. The eyes belonged to a big bird which I knew could only be a hen capercaillie on its nest. Unwilling to disturb the creature, which slowly moved its head to follow every movement, I drew to one side, and could make out from the various ruffles and heavings of wings and feathers that she had chicks under her.

A few days later on returning to the spot, some broken shells were all that remained round the nest, but in the centre, half buried in pine needles, was a single, addled caper's egg. This specimen remained for many years a cherished possession in a glass-topped box lined with pink cotton-wool with a heron's egg on one side of it, and a greyhen's on the other.

Second to None as a Sporting Bird

I have always admired the caper and regard it as second to none as a sporting bird. Those who have stood on some hill-side studded with pine and birch in Perthshire or Banffshire in the clear Highland air on a frosty October morning, and beheld a distant speck or two, obviously caper or blackgame, coming forward swiftly and silently, will agree that few sights are more impressive to a British sportsman.

Capercaillie swinging on to the guns, alternately winnowing and sailing, and turning from side to side, are advancing at a speed which can easily be under-estimated from the bird's great size. The tyro raises his gun in anticipation. But the grandest of all "game birds" is flying for its life, going like a feathered cannon-ball; it is coming; it is overhead; it is gone! At least that is how capers surprised me the first time or two I encountered them. One just could not realise they were going like partridges in a breeze. But Uncle Jim broke the spell by saying, "Treat 'em like Norfolk partridges. Don't bother about 'allowance' and 'distance.' Keep the gun moving."

Tom Speedy, at one time keeper and factor on the Craigmillar Estate, in his delightful book, "Sport in the Highlands and Lowlands" written in 1884, remarks that more shots are fired at capercaillie for the number killed, than at any other kind of game found in covert-shooting. In his day the caper was almost restricted to the Breadalbane Estates.

The history of the capercaillie as a British bird is very interesting. It was common enough in Ireland during the latter part of the 18th Century, and modern research indicates that capers may have lingered in the "golden vale" as late as the early decades of the 19th, but why it faded out and became extinct nobody knows for certain.

According to the books, this was due to the destruction of timber. The same reason is generally given for its supposed banishment from Scotland at approximately the same period. But to anyone who can imagine what the Highlands must have been like at that date, the failure of our native capercaillie must ever remain something of a mystery.

Uncle Jim had a theory that the caper never did completely die out in Scotland. He used to point out that few people of enquiring mind penetrated into the wildest parts of the Highlands in those far-off days, and those who did so knew little and cared less about birds.

When the late E. T. Booth was shooting and collecting birds in Perthshire and Inverness-

Where glens and moors slope down to the River Lyon . . .

shire in the late 1850s he spoke to an old keeper who asserted that Strathglass was supposed to have been the last stronghold of capercaillie, and that a few had lingered on in the Beauly country as late as the 1820s.

During the 1830s as is well known, numbers of capers were brought from Sweden and turned out in the wooded area around Taymouth and Dunkeld. If the caper had just become extinct, how is it that these importees suddenly found conditions so favourable that they spread and flourished? I often think there is a lot to be said for Uncle Jim's idea that the old British caper, personified as it is supposed to be by a single ancient specimen in Newcastle museum, may have never died out after all.

A Poor Table Bird

The caper, in my opinion, is the poorest of table-birds. Towards the end of the last war, when staying at an excellent little hotel in Banffshire, we repeatedly had served up a dish which masqueraded under the title of "hashed grouse," which I was well aware was nothing but the dismembered joints of a couple of female capers, which I had shot a few days previously, which the worthy proprietor was far too cute to present as roasts. A cock caper even when hashed, even in war-time, and even when it has been feeding on the oats-stooks, is only fit for soup.

The male capers will often fight with extreme fury. There are some interesting accounts of these battles in Millais' work on British Game Birds, and I have myself spoken to keepers who have picked up birds utterly exhausted and covered with blood after they had fought to a finish.

As is well known, continental sportsmen stalk and shoot with rifles the cock caper during the ecstasy of the spring-time "spel," when the birds indulge in a kind of frenzy, or singing trance. This is not quite such an unsporting procedure as the average British shooter might be inclined to suppose, from the excessive difficulty of approaching the quarry.

Caper Crosses

Hybrids between caper and black-game were of common occurrence when the latter were more plentiful than they are today. Caper-pheasant crosses are not unknown, but Millais only knew of four in a life-time's experience. Albinistic capers are scarcely ever obtained in this country, but are not so uncommon in Russia and Scandinavia. My old friend, the late Lord Rothschild, possessed a nice series of pied and cream-coloured continental caper-skins.

I believe I am right in saying that no law regulating the shooting of capers was passed until the recent Bird Protection Act, 1954, so that it came under the regulations for wildfowl which could be shot in the ordinary open season. But under the new 1954 Act the capercaillie is specifically mentioned at the top of what is called the "Third Schedule," in the undistinguished company of coot and moorhen, curlew, redshank, snipe and jack snipe. So I suppose we start shooting capers on September 1. One feels a more select company than the common shore-birds might have been selected for our finest game bird; but, after all, he is in the good company of our own little brown bird.

In the Kitchen

AND so seven months of another year have run their course, and another Twelfth passed us by with all its promise for shooting men and gourmets. In the past six years I have given a great many grouse recipes in these notes, but perhaps the following general ones may be useful in 1957.

Roast grouse: Pluck the bird, draw it and wipe out the inside, but do not wash it. Take a small lump of butter or margarine and knead into a squeeze of lemon juice, pepper and salt and put this inside the grouse. Truss it in the usual way and tie a rasher of fat bacon over the breast. Roast in a good oven, 25 to 30 minutes for a young, tender bird, ¾ of an hour for a tougher specimen. It is important to bast it often during the cooking, and just before it is done remove the bacon, flour the breast lightly, and return to the oven to brown.

Grouse in casserole: If the birds are likely to be tough, this is a good method. Draw 2 grouse and cut up into joints. Wipe these over and roll them in seasoned flour. Fry in margarine for a few minutes until lightly browned, and then turn into a casserole. Put 1oz. of flour into the pan and stir over a low heat until brown (you will need about 2oz. of margarine or a little more, altogether). Add 1 pint of good stock and seasoning to taste, and bring to the boil. Peel 4oz. of mushrooms, remove the stalks, wash in slightly salted water and cut into quarters. Put these into the casserole with 1 carrot, 1 whole peeled onion and 2 tomatoes skinned and sliced. Strain the gravy and pour over the contents of the casserole, and then cook gently with the lid on until the grouse are tender. The carrot and onion should be taken out before serving.

Cold grouse: For a summer's evening a delicious dish can be made by pouring the following sauce over joints of cold cooked grouse: Mix together the raw yolks of two eggs with a spoonful of olive oil until smooth and creamy. Then add three spoonfuls of vinegar, one of sugar and another three of chopped parsley and onion or shallot, with plenty of salt and pepper.

Gundog News

Conducted by P. R. A. MOXON, Herne Common, Herne Bay, Kent

MY article last week consisted mainly of an American wildfowler's views upon dog work. Within a couple of days of receiving the letter quoted, I was the recipient of one of Mr. Kingsley Kunhardt's "newsletters," primarily intended for members of the Connecticut Spaniel Field Trial Association, but circulated to anyone interested in spaniel work and trials. "K-K," as I like to call him, is one of the U.S.A.'s most enthusiastic spaniel men, who not only has a high opinion of British dogs but has imported many into the States and is one of our most enthusiastic "ambassadors" for working springers over there. Readers will remember that I reported the interesting talk that he gave us at the Woburn meeting last November, when he was over here on a tour of trials and kennels.

Apart from his other qualities, K-K is a reader of *The Shooting Times,* and in his latest newsletter he not only recommends that American readers subscribe to our journal, but does me the honour of quoting some of my remarks. He also gives me permission to reproduce in my articles anything which I may consider to be of interest to British spaniel men, and pays tribute to several British imports of which he has first-hand or second-hand knowledge. So, having regard to the great interest shown over here in American shooting, and field trials in particular, I reproduce hereunder extracts from his July newsletter, in the belief that it will prove educational and interesting to British readers. Not only does the writer detail recent successes of progeny of imported British springers, but he provides a most illuminating example of American field trial reporting with first-hand knowledge, as he was one of the judges concerned.

"In one of Mr. P. R. A. Moxon's recent articles in *The Shooting Times* of England, he dealt with the matter of 'trainability,' as he calls it, and preached the importance of breeding. Of course, the British have the advantage in having known the progenitors of their studs and brood-bitches back to the third and fourth generations, but according to Moxon they appear to have the same bad habit that we do of sending their bitches to the nearest and most convenient stud rather than to the one that on paper, at least, is the best for them. Unfortunately, he does not try to tell his readers which studs are producing the top dogs (the British consider the bitch more important than the stud) or which lines create a nick. Perhaps some day he will, at least I hope so. On the other hand, he does write about dogs and not about the people that run the trials, provide the food, or make the speeches.

Experimental Futurity

"I am going to follow his example and tell you about the Experimental Futurity, without mentioning anybody who ran the New Jersey prospect stake on May 11th, at which the Futurity was run off. As a result of the various entries and forfeits we had $143.00 of prize money in the pot, which was split evenly between the cocker stake and the springer stake. Bob Moulton judged this with me, and either one of us might have stayed home because the dogs were run one at a time and he spotted the good and bad features that I saw, and appraised them exactly the same as I did. In other words, we had no discussion whatsoever despite the fact that there were several quite tricky occurrences.

"First of all, we decided that this stake should be judged on the performance of the dogs on that day, just as an ordinary stake would be judged. In other words, no effort was made to judge it as a prospect stake. If so, the results would have been somewhat different. There really wasn't anything to the cocker stake because a litter of puppies by Dungarvan Rocky out of Ru-Char's Busy Bee were far ahead of anything else that ran. To select among them was somewhat of a problem, though they were all excellent, semi-trained dogs. The first two, namely Ru-Char's Citation and Ru-Char's Gallorette, retrieved nicely to hand, while Ru-Char's Whirlaway, that got third, had not progressed that far in its training. However, we thought it to be much the most attractive dog in the stake. It has an excellent style and way of going. I prognosticate that it will do very well if it stands up under training. There is another cocker puppy around belonging to Pete Garvan which has been beating Ruth at the spring trials but unfortunately was not eligible for the Futurity.

Completely Trained

"The Springer Futurity was quite a different matter. In this most of the dogs were completely trained, they were steady to flush and shot, could make blind retrieves, were very responsive to the whistle, and quite a few of them were extremely fast. Those that were not steady were not penalized but were under some handicap in that they could not show their marking ability. However, the dog that placed fourth, a Markdown Mick puppy, Sage of Greenbraes, while not steady, had the good fortune of getting some difficult falls — one of them behind a hedge which could have stumped an open dog. She put up a fine performance, with good style, but unfortunately did not retrieve to hand.

"The third dog, Flash of Valley Farm, by Saighton's Sentry of Hardthill out of Valley Farm Cinderella (who was by Kim out of a Snow-Whirl's Tommy daughter), was perhaps the best dog in the stake. She is extremely fast but very reliable, and a thoroughly polished performer. She has won a number of the puppy stakes this year. On the day in question the Irelands, who are new owners (having taken over Bob Montgomery's establishment, together with his dogs and Alex Johnson, his trainer), ran her in two stakes before the Futurity. The result was that they had taken quite a bit of the edge off her and it showed up in some weak marking. However, she may prove to be the best of the lot and is certainly qualified to enter any open-age competition today. By next fall she should have improved.

"The second dog, Julet's Breeze, again by Saighton's Sentry out of Wangunk Snow, who was by Kim out of a Nimrod Tom-Gin bitch, has been running neck-an-neck with Flash through the season. She also had run in two other stakes, and while she is extraordinarily fast she put in one series at three-quarter speed and showed some slight softness on one bird. This is not a fundamental fault and I doubt whether it crops up next fall, but we were judging the spaniels on that day, not on what we were told about them. The first dog, Julet's Rod, was also by Saighton's Sentry out of Hardthill's Canter, a Nimrod Tom-Sixpence puppy (Sixpence by Staindrop Spitfire). He put in a perfectly clean performance throughout the two series, was very sharp on the whistle excepting one time when he refused to turn and instead dove into a bramble patch and flushed a pigeon, for which we marked him up rather than down. Personally I do not think he is going to be as good a dog as the other two, though in heavy cover he might beat them again. In any event, he hasn't had as good a spring record as they.

An Interesting Thing

"The interesting thing about these first three puppies is that they were by Sentry, out of three different bitches. Jules Farkas trained the first two, and Alex Johnson trained Flash. At the Hartford field trial another Sentry puppy showed up, trained by an amateur, and beat these three. He also is steady and fully trained. Another Sentry puppy out of an English bitch placed second in the English Championships (National) last January. There is one other Sentry puppy that I have seen that might have been better than any of them, but unfortunately he was shot over extensively when he was only six months old and has become pretty much of an outlaw. Perhaps he can be trained, and perhaps he cannot. That remains to be seen. The only other Sentry puppy I have seen

The clumber spaniel—one of the breeds the Spaniel Club wish to encourage to trials.

is one that I took as a stud fee, who is utterly and absolutely no good whatsoever — wouldn't that be the case!

"The thing that impressed me most about this breeding is their great speed and their evident trainability. Sentry himself was at his peak when he was a year and a half old, and it may be that these puppies will not develop into top dogs, but I can say I have never seen any puppies that could compare with them excepting Ginger and Freckles at the Valley Forge prospect stake many years ago. They had never been trained at all at the time but they certainly put up a magnificent performance chasing butterflies, airplanes and song birds. They never came near enough to their handler to find a pigeon and were not placed by the judges, but they gave at that time clear evidence of the quality with which we all became familiar in later years. Among the other dogs in the Springer Futurity was a puppy of Countryman which showed some indications of his Daddy's class, and perhaps may come along to be an interesting competitor. He is in Ruth Greening's string. There was also a brother of Flash and a brother of Sage, the fourth dog, which were of real interest but not on that particular day."

From the above it will be seen that our dogs have been doing pretty well in the U.S.A. in the way of siring useful puppies. The "Kim" to which K-K refers is doubtless Greatford Kim, which the writer has in his own kennels, and which was imported from Major Peacock's kennel. He also mentions Saighton's Sentry, imported from Talbot Radcliffe, and he mentions a point in connection with this strain to which I have so often referred — "trainability." Descendants of Staindrop Spitfire, the late Edgar Winter's great dog, are still doing well, apparently, and Spitfire has left an indelible mark upon springers both in this country and the U.S.A. He was undoubtedly one of the greatest stud forces in the breed of all time. From the report of the running in the trial readers will note the great perception and understanding that Kingsley Kunhardt has of dog work, especially of the finer points that the inexperienced are inclined to overlook. I hope we have further newsletters from him in the future.

Anecdote On Punishment

Mr. Graham Blacklock sends me an interesting anecdote, prompted by my recent article upon punishment. "Many years ago," he writes, "a gentleman drove up to the meeting place for a shoot, jumped out of his dog-cart, took out a dog whip from his hare pocket, took off his coat and rolled up his shirtsleeves. He then pulled a dog from the back of the cart and proceeded to give it a thorough drubbing. A fellow guest remonstrated, saying, 'Why all this, the dog has not done anything wrong.' 'No,' replied the owner, 'but he damned soon will, and then I won't be able to get hold of him!'."

Probably a true story, and one which proves that, in some ways at least, we dog people have progressed since then!

Field Trials

A ballot was held by retriever and spaniel societies to decide upon the judges for the respective Championship stakes, and the results of these are now known. The Retriever Championship will be at Littlecote, near Hungerford, Berks., on December 11 and 12, when the judges will be Major Hugh Peacock, Major D. Blackett and Mr. Andrew Wylie. The Spaniel Championship will be at Presaddfed, Bodedern, near Holyhead, on January 9 and 10, when the judges will be Messrs. Andrew Wylie and Reg. Hill, with Dick Male as referee.

At the annual general meeting of the Spaniel Club much concern was felt at the very poor entry in the stake reserved for "Any variety of Spaniel (excluding English springers and cockers)" at the Spaniel Club Field Trials last season. The Spaniel Club is most anxious to do all it can to encourage the entry of the numerically weaker breeds.

It is realized, too, the hesitation a novice handler with a novice dog may feel in entering and competing against experienced handlers and dogs. With this in mind the meeting decided to include an "All Aged Variety Stake" in their trials in the autumn (excluding English springers and cockers) with a nominal entry fee of one guinea per entry.

In addition to the prize money and the Club "breed" trophies, the Spaniel Club would offer a special prize of three guineas for the best novice handler and dog in each of the breeds. It is hoped that each breed society will also offer a special prize or trophy to encourage their members to enter.

I am writing to the secretary of each breed society asking if they would kindly send me a list of members actively interested in the working side of their breed, and to these I will send full particulars of the Spaniel Club's trials and the All-Aged-Any-Variety Stake.

Would you please send me a list of anyone whom you think would take part and possibly enter in this stake.

* * *

The South Eastern Gundog Society gave a demonstration at the County Young Farmers' Rally at Wooton, Surrey. Mr. G. S. Smith organised and commented on the demonstration, which was provided by Mr. Lee's Crusader of Colchis, Mr. Child's Burghwood Flight, Mr. Shelton's Templegrove Jane, and Mrs. Smith's Wingfield Monarch and Lacygreen Pillar. Messrs. Solly, Osmond and Mahoney acted as stewards, and demonstrations with dummies of various forms of gundog training were so enthusiastically received that most of the rest of the Rally came to a halt during the demonstration.

The next training class will be held at Cottage Farm, Betchworth, on Sunday, August 18. Meet at Betchworth Village Hall at 2.30 p.m. Teas provided.

Loon Afloat

by J. F. Wharton

It is the time of early June,
The loon's month when in weed green bay,
Sanctuary of his highland lochan,
He dives and fishes through the day
Around a chosen islet.
Through midday sun and midnight light
His mate continues on the nest;
But now's the time when two set eggs
Receive the moisture from his breast:
He shuffles on and settles.

An eerie gurgle leaves his throat,
Nearby a lochan with a loon afloat.

FOURTEEN years ago, as the sun sank down below the Djebel in the Libyan Desert, I sat on a rock and imagined myself watching a sunset—way out west over the Atlantic—from a Hebridean isle. It was thus that I came to write, in those few minutes of remaining light, the twelve lines of verse above.

Although it is the great northern diver that is referred to as a loon, in North America both the black- and red-throated divers come under loon names, but prefixed differently from the common denomination of the largest of the three. However, it is with the red-throated diver that I have always associated the name loon as well as those small lochans of the north-west of Scotland and the isles where mature brown trout may be only a quarter of a pound in weight.

The northern diver has been observed with fledgelings on Shetland tides, but it is really a breeder in more northerly latitudes. Those seen summering off the western seaboard in the Minches and off northern Ireland, are immature, non-breeding birds following the sand eels, herring and mackerel shoals.

The black-throated diver, a bird of lesser stature in both size and weight, summers and breeds on large Scottish lochs on whose shores it nests. Otherwise, it is of chiefly maritime inclination.

The red-throated diver is smaller still in weight and scales around the five-pound mark. This is only half that attained by its northern relation. This bird summers on the small hill lochs and usually chooses an island site where two eggs—the normal complement for divers—are laid in a scrape, either unlined or lined with pieces of rotten weed. The female does most of the incubating over an average period of four weeks and both sexes manage their young for a further eight weeks after hatching. The majority of broods appear to break shell in mid-June and it is towards the end of August that the family parties start breaking up and including sea locks in their fishing grounds.

Besides amphibians, crustaceans, molluscs, insects and plant matter, the chief diet is fish which are taken by diving to any depth down to thirty-odd feet. The usual underwater period is about one minute and both feet and wings are used in propulsion.

Their flight is fast and, although reputed to "jump" off water on occasions, I have only observed them do a "pattering" take-off. Both sexes appear identical to look at, although young birds have to await their second summer before attaining adult plumage.

Sexual Display

In the earlier part of the spring, many forms of sexual display take place—both individually and by group. Snake-like sea-serpent and torpedo races, follow-my-leader, and spook-like rising through the surface of the water, can provide a series of most interesting and eye-catching events. In fact, I am always sorry when my fishing holiday to the north-west falls too late to witness all this once again.

There can be no doubt that divers, like cormorants and the saw-billed diving duck, do an immense amount of thinning out in their summer-time fishing quarters. I feel that this applies particularly to those small chains of lochs in a river system. Many are the smolts, coming down in May, which must be taken, as well as a percentage of the younger resident salmon parr.

With regard to other fish — and whatever one's gillie may hold to — I do not think an annual thinning out of small brownies from acid peat lochs can really make much difference. There is little enough fish food, in any case, to support all that hatch forth from the burn bottom redds and a good thinning out by nature saves the resultant growth situation from getting even worse. The only limestone lochs containing plenty of large trout that I have been to were, Boralie, Calladale, Crosspull and Lanish at Keoldale, Cafe Wrath. All these, and the prodigous Loch Calva, in the folds behind Edrachillis Bay on the west side, never seem to suffer either shortage or quality from divers or anything else excepting, perhaps, ourselves—piscatorial men.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Fixture List

Aug. 17: Hayfield G.C., Derbyshire. Members' Shoot. 2 p.m.

Aug. 17: Bowland and District G.C., nr. Clitheroe, Lancs. Open Shoot, D.T.L. and Skeet.

Aug 17: Leicestershire D.T.L. Championship, Deer's Leap G.C., Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

Aug. 17: North Wales D.T.L. Championship, North Wales G.C., Rhosesmor, Mold, Flintshire.

Aug. 18: Bisley G.C. Silberman Trophy Shoot.

Aug. 21: Cavendish G.C., Forest Town, Notts. 6.30 p.m.

August 24: Wetherby and District G.C. Members' Shoot.

Aug. 24: Bedford and District G.C., Elstow. Bedford Open Cash Skeet event, 100 Birds.

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Reports and Results

BRITISH OPEN SKEET CHAMPIONSHIP

The **Bedford and District Gun Club** were the hosts to the C.P.S.A. for the third time for the British Open Skeet Championship on July 20, when the 16th annual meeting was held on their ground at Elstew. Despite the dull and showery weather, the standard of scoring was higher than usual; and 97 shooters took part, compared with 115 in 1956 and 83 in 1955.

Four skeet layouts, side-by-side were used, as previously, and Mr. E. T. Peacock was the Field Captain. Competitors were divided into three classes (A, B and C) according to their average scores, and prizes were awarded over 100 birds for the two senior classes, and over 60 for Class C, ladies and colts (under 19).

There were forty scores of 20/20 during the meeting, including one of 80/80 by Mr. J. Wheater over the first four stages. Three competitors scored 60/60, and four 40/40. As in 1956, a party of U.S.A.F. officers and sergeants added interest and colour to the meeting, seven of them taking part, including three Colonels.

M/Sgt. G. A. Morin, U.S.A.F., was the winner of the Open Championship, after shooting off a tie with Mr. J. Wheater (Hull), both having scored 98/100. Morin scored a possible of 20/20 in the shoot-off; Wheater 17.

The Ladies' Skeet Championship was retained by Mrs. Marjorie Kidwill (Hillingdon), with the excellent score of 54/60; and Mr. J. Wheater won the Coronation Cup for the fifth year in succession, for the highest aggregate score over six major events in 1957.

Master Allan Jones (Rhosesmor, North Wales), aged 18, shot exceptionally well to win the Colts' event with 55/60. The Inter-Club Match was won by the Ruislip Rod and Gun Club, whose same team represented the United States in the International Team Match, which was won by England.

The presentation of prizes took place in the Bedford Gun Club's newly erected pavilion at the end of the meeting, when the various awards were made to their respective winners by Mrs. Pring, the wife of Mr. C. H. Pring, Manager of the Ammunition Sales Department of I.C.I. Unfortunately, Mrs. Walter Sable, who was to have presented the prizes, was unable to attend the meeting owing to illness.

Invaluable assistance was given to the organisers by Mr. V. H. Castle and Mr. A. G. Duke as squad hustlers, and by Mr. L. A. W. Robinson of *The Shooting Times* on the statistical side. The referees who kindly gave their services included Messrs. F. Dance, C. E. Voss, B. V. Powell, R. W. Jacob and J. Halliwell.

Results: Skeet Championship (Open) over 100 birds: 1, M/Sgt. G. A. Morin (U.S.A.F.) 98/100; 2, J. Wheater (Hull), 98/100.

Class "A" over 100 birds: 1, M. L. Freeman (Peterborough), 96; 2, E. T. Peacock (Shefford, Beds), 95; 3, Col. W. A. Anderson (U.S.A.F.) 95; 4, Col. L. J. Ervin (U.S.A.F.), 95; 5, T/Sgt. M. D. Tindol (U.S.A.F.), 94.

Class "B" over 100 birds: Northolt Cup: A. J. Steele (Dunmow), 95; 2, J. H. Wiseman (Saffron 94; 4, R. D. Purcell (Luton), 92; 5, T. S. Bamber (Preston), 91; 6, P. Wetton (Clitheroe), 90.

Class "C" over 60 birds: 1, G. J. Williamson (Hatfield), 49; 2, E. Tonks (Warwicks.), 48; 3, L. Finden (Pillerton, Warwicks.), 45.

Ladies, over 60 birds: 1, Mrs. J. R. Kidwill (Hillingdon), 54; 2, Mrs. B. C. Baxter (Enfield), 40.

Colts, over 60 birds: 1, Allan Jones (North Wales), 55; 2, Nigel Foster (London), 54; 3, John Sanders (Wirral), 53; 4, John Pletcher (U.S.A.), 50; 5, Lindsay B. Ervin (U.S.A.), 49.

International Skeet Match: Winners: England, Walden), 95; 3, D. Allingham (Shefford, Beds.), 476/500 (E. T. Peacock, J. Wheater, E. L. Nickols, A. J. Steele, M. L. Freeman); 2, U.S.A., 468; 3, All Comers, 443.

Inter-Club Team Event (Teams of Five, 100 birds each): Winners: Ruislip Rod and Gun Club, 468 (M/Sgt. G. A. Morin, T./Sgt. M. Tindol, Col. W. A. Anderson, Major M. Powers, Col. L. J. Ervin); 2, Leicester and District Gun Club, 463; 3, Waltham Abbey Gun Club, 460.

All Counties Skeet Championship (Holders of residential Area and County Skeet Championships only): Winner: M. L. Freeman (Lincolnshire), 96.

Coronation Challenge Cup (Highest aggregate over six principal events in 1956): 1, J. Wheater (Hull), 1,007 ex 110; 2, R. Wilkinson (York), 976; 3, W. E. Harris (Gravesend), 923.

* * *

The Open Leicestershire Skeet Championship was held at the **Leicester and District Gun Club** on July 13, when 31 guns attended and shot through in very rainy and windy weather. However, this did not seem to affect the scores much, and four "Skeet 20" marksmanship badges were given by the Club to E. L. Nickols, J. Wheater, A. Albrighton and A. Pratt, together with a special blazer badge for winning the "Open Championship" to E. L. Nickols.

Open Skeet Championship Class A: 1, E. L. Nickols; 2, G. Freeman; 3, A. Pratt. Class B: 1, A. J. Freeman; 2, R. Blacklock; 3, J. Fradley. Residential Winner of I.C.I. Shield and Medal: A. Pratt. Open 50 D.T.L.—Class A: 1, W. G. A. Middleton; 2, R. Townroe; 3, A. Pratt. Class B: 1, R. Blacklock; 2, A. Halsey; 3, J. Fradley. High Gun: J. Wheater. Double Rise Event: Equal, M. Freeman and E. L. Nickols. Novice Event: 1, E. Royle; 2, Mr. Wallwyn; 3, Mr. Slaney.

* * *

Pocklington and District Gun Club held the East Yorkshire Down-the-Line Championship at their new ground at Barmby Moor, on Saturday, July 20.

Two very heavy storms during the afternoon rather marred the proceedings, otherwise the shooting was of a high standard and competitors and spectators alike had an enjoyable time.

Mr. Tom Swift, of Londesborough, who instituted this championship some 27 years ago was present and took an active part in the proceedings.

The winner of the Open Championship and the Kenneth Thelwall Challenge Cup was J. W. M. Jackson, of Cawood (Nr. Selby) with a score of 94 points ex 100. The I.C.I. Plaque and Medal for the Residential Championship went to J. R. Hall, of Acklam (Nr. Malton) 93 ex 100. W. Waudby Jnr., of Newport was the winner of the Novice Tankard with 72 ex 100.

* * *

The usual **Hayfield Gun Club** programme was fired between showers on July 27. "A" Class spoon was won by R. W. Lomas, after a shoot-off with A. M. Toms, R. J. Padfield and Dr. D. Scott. G. Blackhurst had an easier time, as he won "B" spoon outright. R. Retchless was given hearty rounds of applause for winning the Down-the-Line event, as his name seems to have been overlooked for some time. Skeet went to C. Wilson; partridges to R. W. Lomas; pheasants to R. J. Padfield and grouse to V. Harrison, who scored a possible, followed by R. W. Lomas and W. Bolton, who each scored nineteen.

A final event of 5 Down-the-Line caused much amusement, clays flirting away at very nearly right angles to the trap, others almost knocking the roof off the trap-house, and others flicked out of the trap at least a foot above the surface of the earth. S. B. Wilson, however, caught most of them.

Division I: Bedford "A" 91, Blandford "A" 88; Birmingham "A" 94, Blandford "A" 87; Birmingham "A" 92, Hayfield "A" 89; Blandford "A" 89, Wormshill and Lynsted 72; Grange 81, Wormshill and Lynsted 70; Hayfield "A" 90, Bedford "A" 88; Hayfield "A" 86, Grange 77; Waltham Abbey "A" 86, Grange 84.

Division II: Bedford "B" 74, Birmingham "B" 63; Bedford "B" 77, Harrogate 75; Blandford "B" 82, Harrogate 73; Blandford "B" 82, Wetherby 76; Childrey 86, Waltham Abbey "B" 82; Harrogate 78, Birmingham "B" 67.

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SKEET LEAGUE

The Southern Counties Skeet Championship was held at the **Blandford & District Gun Club's** shooting ground, Hedge End, Blandford, Dorset, on July 27.

Some excellent scores were recorded despite the very strong wind. Fourteen Skeet 20s were clocked during the meeting which must be nearing a record for the event. The Championship was won by R. E. Dutton, 78 x 80.

Class A: 1, E. T. Peacock, 77 x 80; 2, D. Allingham, 76 x 80; 3, N. Cook, 75 x 80; 4, P. Pocock, 74 x 80.

Class B: 1, A. Beale, 73 x 80; 2, F. Readhead, 71 x 80; 3, J. Wright, 71 x 80; 4, W. Mussel, 70 x 80.

Class C: 1, K. Handy, 66 x 80; 2, J. Pletcher, 64 x 80.

The I.C.I. Shield was won by P. Pocock.

LEAGUE TABLES

DIVISION I

Team	Matches shot	W.	D.	Lost	Kills for	Kills ag'nst	Pts
Birmingham "A" ...	4	4	–	–	369	325	8
Blandford "A" ...	4	2	–	2	359	346	4
Hayfield "A" ...	4	2	–	2	355	348	4
Waltham Abbey "A"	3	2	–	1	266	269	4
Grange	3	1	–	2	242	242	2
Bedford "A" ...	3	1	–	2	264	266	2
Wormshill and Lynsted	3	–	–	3	206	265	0

DIVISION II

Team	Matches shot	W.	D.	Lost	Kills for	Kills ag'nst	Pts
Hayfield "B" ...	3	3	–	–	262	225	6
Childrey	3	2	1	–	256	247	5
Blandford "B" ...	3	2	–	1	242	229	4
Bedford "B" ...	3	2	–	1	227	220	4
Waltham Abbey "B"	4	2	–	2	316	316	4
West Sussex	3	1	1	1	235	248	3
Harrogate	3	1	–	2	226	226	2
Wetherby	4	1	–	3	323	330	2
Birmingham "B" ...	4	–	–	4	270	316	0

Forthcoming Field Trials

SECRETARIES OF FIELD TRIAL SOCIETIES ARE INVITED TO SEND US REPORTS OF THEIR TRIALS FOR PUBLICATION IN "THE SHOOTING TIMES." REPORTS SHOULD BE SENT DIRECT TO THE KENNEL EDITOR, MR. P. R. A. MOXON, HERNE COMMON, HERNE BAY, KENT.

Aug. 19 & 20: Gamekeepers National Association (Retrievers). Lennoxlove Estate, Hadington. Secretary: A. Stewart, Hills Tower, Lochfoot, Dumfries.

Sept. 24 & 25: I.G.L. Pointer and Setter Society (Puppy and Non-Winners and All-Age Stakes). Sutton Manor, Sutton Scotney, Winchester, Hants. Judges: Lady Auckland and Mr. T. Gaunt. Secretary: E. Holland Buckley, The Kennel Club, 1-4 Clarges Street, Piccadilly, London, W.1.

Grey Brigand

Occasionally, in the back-end of the year, a bird of ill-omen appears out of the sea-mists, and planes down to the sand and pebbles of the North Lancashire coast. It is the hooded crow, near-relative of the carrion crow, blown down from its native Scotland by the gales of September and October. For a few days, until it recovers from its long battle with the storm, the stranger picks about the sand, feeding on the shellfish, or the sand-hoppers. Or else on the carrion, in the form of oiled birds, that occasionally litter the smooth beaches.

I have met this black and grey brigand many times on its native heath—more often than not catching it in the act. Once in Lanarkshire, at the edge of a conifer wood, I put one up from the bracken, its tusk-like beak slimed with the bright yellow of egg yolk. A short search revealed a plundered pheasant nest. In the Orkneys, on wind-blown, treeless Ronaldsay, I disturbed a pair of the grey crows trying to snatch a chicken or two from a coop perched on the edge of a towering sea-cliff. In the Hebridean islands they combed the rolling, spiky machar for the nests of the cheery golden plovers, or else squabbled about the carcase of an occasional sheep.

On Fair Isle, way out in the blue of Shetland water, they were rare, though the only pair we did see were feeding, fittingly, on the remains of redshank killed by a wandering peregrine. Perhaps the ideal setting for these birds is the seaward end of Loch Leven. There one may see them picking about the mud on the foreshore, with the mist-wraithed mountains of the Great Glen a fitting backcloth. Fitting, for one may remember that the Great Glen is the Glencoe of sinister history. Even more sinister, when one may reflect that the ancestors of these birds busy on the sea-grass arrived quickly on the site of the ill-famed massacre. And probably waited—with the timeless patience of their kind—until the few survivors wandering the bitter hills died in the snow.—Rowan.

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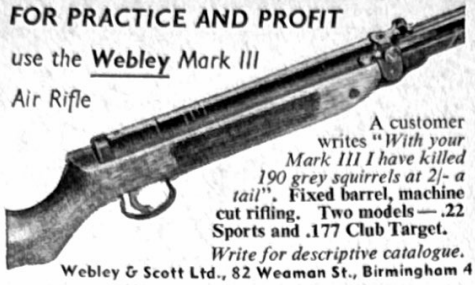

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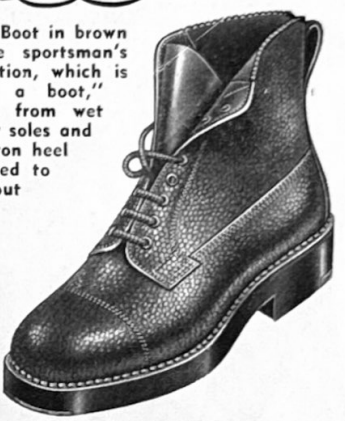

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